

# **YORK ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB REPORT 2020**

**Published by the York Ornithological Club  
2021**



## **Compiled by**

J. C. Begbie, D. M. Bye, K. J. Chapman, P. A. Doherty,  
C. Gomersall, J. Leadley, D. Richardson,  
C. B. Thomas & F. Walton

## **Edited by**

K. J. Chapman, J. C. Begbie, D. M. Bye, R. E. Chapman,  
P. A. Doherty, J. Leadley & M. Sitnikova

Printed and bound by  
ColourOptions Ltd, York

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## Committee 2020

President	Professor Sir John Lawton
Chairman	Barry Thomas Email: <a href="mailto:chairman@yorkbirding.org.uk">chairman@yorkbirding.org.uk</a>
Secretary	Jane Chapman Email: <a href="mailto:secretary@yorkbirding.org.uk">secretary@yorkbirding.org.uk</a>
Treasurer	Masha Sitnikova Email: <a href="mailto:treasurer@yorkbirding.org.uk">treasurer@yorkbirding.org.uk</a>
Recorder	Jono Leadley Email: <a href="mailto:recorder@yorkbirding.org.uk">recorder@yorkbirding.org.uk</a>
Committee Members	J. C. Begbie    R. E. Chapman E. Buizza      P. A. Doherty D. M. Bye      P. E. W. Watson

# York Ornithological Club

As in previous years, the annual 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 130 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) and one dedicated to Swifts (@York\_Swifts). We also have an active email group where information about local sightings is shared.

## Editorial

Welcome to York Ornithological Club's 2020 Report, compiled and produced by the Editorial Committee. We hope you will find it interesting and informative.

This was the year that was turned on its head by the global pandemic, with consequent effects on the club's activities: the programme of events and talks sadly had to be cancelled after the March lockdown through to the end of the year, though we did successfully hold a Photo Review of the Year and Quiz via Zoom in December – for many a new way of communicating that has since become commonplace. However, the fact that for several months everyone was forced to birdwatch at home and at sites within walking or cycling distance only meant that we took the time to savour our local areas and get to know them much better. The knock-on effect was that we received far more garden records and records relating to common residents and summer visitors than we would normally get from some parts of the recording area, though fewer from others. There was an unexpected number of rarities too, including three firsts for the area – Neil Cooper received a mind-boggling garden tick when a White-tailed Eagle sailed over just a few days

into lockdown and, towards the end of the year, York's first Common Rosefinch and Franklin's Gull were found, rounding off an extraordinary year which also saw two juvenile Black Kites, Lesser Yellowlegs, Red-rumped Swallow and Cattle Egret grace the area. The most appreciated bird however was probably the first-summer female Red-Footed Falcon that obligingly arrived just as the first lockdown lifted enabling local birders to flock to Biggin to see her over her week-long stay. As much as the bird, most of us just enjoyed the chance to catch up with birding friends in person!

As noted in previous years, 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 – again notably the Lower Derwent Valley NNR and SE53. It does not necessarily follow that some species are absent elsewhere; we may just not have anyone visiting that particular area often and pandemic restrictions on travel undoubtedly exacerbated the situation. The hectads (10km x 10km squares) SE73 and SE77 in the northeast and southeast of the recording area were again under-recorded, especially as few club members live around there. Given the restrictions on movement and inability to visit sites, many surveys could not be undertaken this year or were severely truncated. The BBS first visits mostly had to be abandoned, though some surveyors did get out for the second visit, however, the Woodcock survey survived mostly unscathed. WeBS counts in the LDV were largely unaffected but spring and summer counts at CHL and Heslington East were. The club's annual survey was a repeat of the Golden Plover survey initially undertaken in 2018. Lockdown was not all bad news however, as it provided an opportunity to ask the membership to record all the raptors that they saw when out or from their gardens from April onwards and records have been flooding in ever since.

### **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 YOC recording area. All members are encouraged to submit records, whatever their level of knowledge.

News of recent sightings can be circulated via the googlegroup (yorkbirding@googlegroups.com) or Twitter (@yorkbirding). However, descriptions of rarities should be submitted to the Recorder as soon as possible after the sighting, preferably by email to recorder@yorkbirding.org.uk.

Caution should **always** be exercised over publicising records of rare breeding birds in the breeding season, and of scarcer raptors at any time of year in particular, owing to ongoing persecution (a list of these is on the website). Sensitive records should be submitted confidentially to the Recorder only.

We ask that records are submitted by the end of March following the relevant year to be considered for appearance in the Annual Report. Ideally records will be submitted as an email attachment on the club spreadsheet, which can be downloaded from the website (www.yorkbirding.org.uk) – there are full instructions

on how to fill this in on the 'guidance' tab. You can submit the whole year's records at once on this at the end of the year, or more frequently if you prefer. Photographs for inclusion in the YOC Report should be submitted directly by email to [editor@yorkbirding.org.uk](mailto:editor@yorkbirding.org.uk). Casual records can also be submitted this way or via the casual records form on the website.

For each species, records should give the site and date with numbers of birds noted wherever possible (there are columns on the spreadsheet for this) as actual numbers enable the comparison of populations between years. For large flocks of birds, approximate numbers are acceptable.

### **Rarer species requiring descriptions**

If you are lucky enough to find a rare species, you are asked to provide details and a description of the bird(s) to the appropriate committee. This enables assessment of the record. A list of species requiring descriptions to be submitted to the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union can be found at [www.ynu.org.uk/birds/](http://www.ynu.org.uk/birds/) and for national rarities to the British Birds Rarities Committee at <https://www.bbrc.org.uk/>.

For birds rare locally, please provide details and a description for the species listed on page 154. For notoriously difficult to identify species (marked with an asterisk), acceptance is only likely with a good photograph or video, which will enable elimination of similar species.

Only records that are considered to be acceptable will be listed in the YOC Report. Observers of rejected/unproven records will generally not be contacted unless feedback is requested. 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. The list of species requiring descriptions is reviewed regularly.

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

Records are received and collated, and, once sightings of description species are verified, these are 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. The list of birds seen in the York recording area since 1966 has been updated.

### **Acknowledgements**

As ever, thank you very much to everyone who contributed records, by whatever means, without which the annual report would not be possible. One of the most significant sites for birds in the York area is the Lower Derwent Valley. Huge thanks once again to the Natural England team for sharing records posted on the LDV Blog and for WeBS counts and to Craig Ralston for allowing us to include the annual Rare Breeding Bird Panel report for the Lower Derwent Valley

NNR and Skipwith Common. Thanks 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. Thank you to Richard Baines at the North Yorkshire Turtle Dove Project for Turtle Dove records from the northern tetrads and to Neil Calbrade at the BTO for providing BirdTrack records. We are very grateful to Amanda Hewick at Stockbridge Technology Centre, Cawood for supplying the weather data. Thank you to Duncan Bye, Neil Cooper, Paul Doherty, Adam Firth, Jono Leadley, Oliver Metcalf, Craig Ralston and David Tate for their articles, and also to Colin Beale (UoYRG), Mark Lucas and Hugh Brazier (Summerfield Nursery, Upper Poppleton and Harewood Whin (aka Rufforth Tip)). for giving us permission to reprint extracts from their Ringing Reports.

We are very grateful to Tom Broxup, Duncan Bye, Mark Coates, Claire Dyson, Ben Egron-Reverseau, Adam Firth, Matt Gowney, Adrian Hotson, Josh Hutt, Tim Jones, Jono Leadley, Hannah Martin, Oliver Metcalf, Peter Reed, Maria Scullion, Craig Storton, Mike Walton, Antony Ward, Tim Ward 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 once again to Doug Crawford for keeping everyone up to date about the Minster Peregrines via their dedicated Twitter feed.

Many thanks to everyone involved with the preparation of the report for publication. Records from YorkBirding emails and the LDV Blog were collated by Jane Chapman and from the Twitter feed by Duncan Bye. For the first time we also have records submitted via eBird (eBird Basic Dataset. Version: EBD\_relNov-2020. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Nov 2020); these were extracted by Oliver Metcalf. Rob Chapman and Jane Chapman formatted all records and collated them onto the master spreadsheet; Paul Doherty compiled the Highlights of 2020 and the weather report was prepared by David Tate. Thank you to all of the section writers for the time and effort taken to make sure that the species accounts give an accurate reflection of the status of each species during the year, as it is not possible to include every record in each account. The species reports in the Classified List were written by: Jonathan Begbie, Duncan Bye, Jane Chapman, Paul Doherty, Chris Gomersall, Jono Leadley, Dave Richardson, Barry Thomas and Fiona Walton.

Verification of records of rare and scarcer species was undertaken by Jono Leadley, York Area 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. Any records from previous years that have been accepted/rejected are included at the end of the classified list.

Jane Chapman – Editor



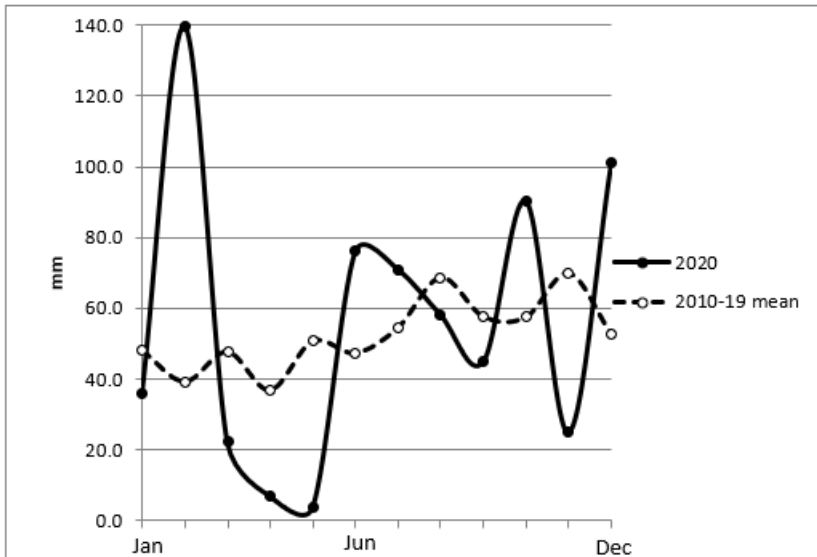
# Highlights of 2020

## Weather in 2020

2020 had the highest February rainfall total recorded in the UK since records began in 1766. However, for those not flooded out, it will be the dry and sunny May that will probably last longest in the memory.

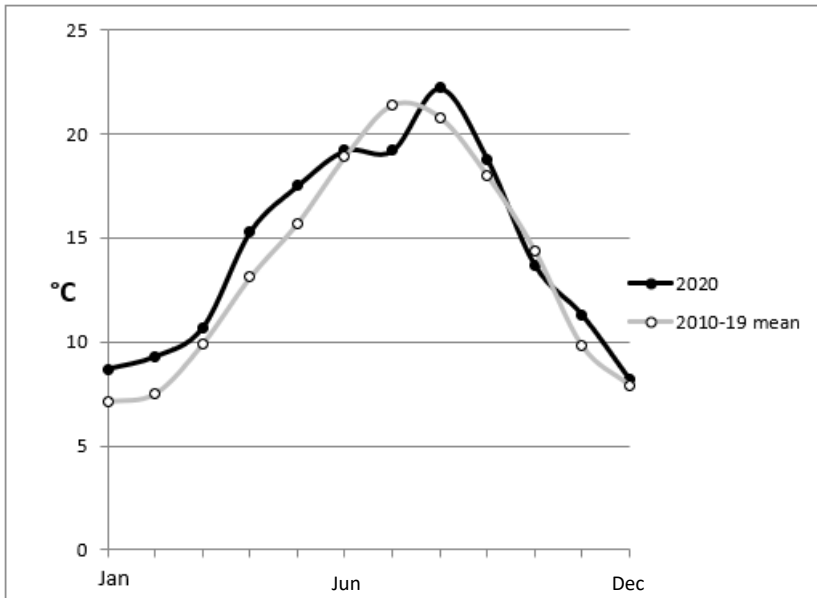
In the York area, January was mild and relatively dry (see Graphs 1 and 2). The mean maximum temperature was 1.6°C above the 10-year mean and 14.3°C was recorded on the 8th. There were only three air frosts throughout the month. The only significant amount of rain was recorded on the 8th (12.7mm) and there were 20 dry days. Similar conditions continued into the first week of February until the arrival of storm Ciara on the 8th. This storm brought 45mm of rain and was rapidly followed by storm Dennis on the 15th which added a further 24mm. Extensive flooding occurred in the West Riding but although the flood defences in York withstood the deluges the surrounding farmland was left saturated. The total rainfall for February was 139.7mm making it the wettest month in the York area since July 2009. The dominant westerlies also resulted in above average temperatures and only two nights had air frosts. During March the cyclonic conditions gave way to high pressure, and this brought increasingly drier and milder sunny days though the nights were cold, with -3.2°C on the 23rd proving to be the lowest temperature of late winter.

**Graph 1 Monthly rainfall totals for 2020 and the monthly means for 2010-19**



A significant dry spell began on 16th March and continued until the first week of June. During this lengthy period only 10.2mm of rain were recorded and the May total of 3.9mm was the lowest monthly total since April 2011. Also, the March-May total of 33.1mm is by far the lowest recorded since at least 2002 and may well be a York area record. The drought was accompanied by above average temperatures and sunshine hours. May had six days when temperatures exceeded 20°C and the mean maximum for the month was 1.8°C above that of the previous ten years. As a result of these conditions soils dried out rapidly and near Riccall winter cereals were undergoing irrigation as early as 11th April. Those bird species which feed their young on soil invertebrates, such as Blackbirds and Rooks, began to find prey difficult to access whilst those birds that focus on plant invertebrates, such as Whitethroat and Yellowhammer, had an excellent breeding season.

**Graph 2 Monthly maximum temperature means for 2020 and 2010-19**



The drought ended in early June when a total of 21.2mm of rain was recorded on the 4th and 5th. This was followed by periods of unsettled weather and the monthly rainfall total was 60% above the 10-year mean. The dominant southwesterlies also brought warm air and 20°C was exceeded on 16 days including the maximum of 28.8°C on the 27th. The airflow became more westerly in July bringing cool and cloudy weather, though the rainfall total remained about average. The mean monthly temperature was a noticeable 2.2°C below the 10-year mean and the maximum of 25°C on the 31st was 8°C below the 2019 equivalent. August was the hottest month of the year with seven days exceeding

25°C, including 30.7°C on the 12th which proved to be the highest recorded in 2020. The monthly rainfall total was below average. After an unsettled start September had a warm, dry, sunny spell from the 13th to the 21st with temperatures reaching 26.2°C on the 16th. This was followed by a week of north westerly winds which brought cooler and wetter conditions, so the month ended with average temperatures and below average rainfall.

Westerly winds were dominant throughout October and they brought dull wet weather. The highest rainfall total of 19.3mm on the 7th was unexceptional but rain occurred on 23 days and the monthly total was almost 60% above the 10-year mean. November started mild and wet but as high pressure developed conditions turned colder, drier and cloudier. The first air frost was recorded on the 20th and there were two more before the end of the month. The overall temperature was 0.7°C below the 10-year mean whilst the rainfall total was about a third of the 10-year mean. Rainfall occurred on all but eight days in December and the monthly total was almost double the 10-year mean. The driest period came at the end of the month and with clearing skies temperatures fell leading to sharp frosts on the 25th and the 28th when a minimum of -3.2°C was recorded.

## January

The two **Bewick's Swans** seen at the end of 2019 were still present on 1st January and stayed at Ellerton Ings until the 15th, with one still there on the 19th. A similar timeline was seen with two **Scaup** at Aughton Ings from the 1st to the 19th and then three at NDC on the 24th and to the month's end. Geese often have a strong presence in the LDV at the start of the year and eight **European White-fronted Geese** built up to 79 by the 13th. Up to 11 **Tundra Bean Geese** were present from the 9th to the 28th and good numbers of **Pink-footed Geese** around during the month with 928 heading northwest on the 11th. A party of 21 **Barnacle Geese** which flew north along the LDV on the 24th may well have been wild birds. The now annual **Green-winged Teal** was found at Wheldrake Ings on the 24th and was seen on a couple more dates to the month end. To prove that there are wildfowl away from the LDV, the year's peak count of **Goosander** came from Redhouse Reservoir with 87 there on the 19th. Gulls are another winter staple and single **Caspian** and **Iceland Gulls** were feeding on fields near Riccall during the month, plus a **Mediterranean Gull** was found in the Wheldrake Ings roost on the 26th. A **Long-eared Owl** was a good find at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th. **Great White Egrets** are becoming a regular sight and one was at Bolton Percy and Appleton Roebuck on the 7th. Two **Ravens** were at Castle Howard on the 19th. Small birds included five wintering **Chiffchaff** and three **Cetti's Warblers** in the LDV, and a **Mealy Redpoll** at Melbourne on the 23rd was the only record for 2020. A **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was at Allerthorpe Common on the 23rd. In a poor winter for **Waxwings** there were six at Strensall on the 26th and at this time there were up to 300+ **Corn Buntings** around the LDV with 111 at the Pocklington Canal roost on the 24th. The standout roost, indeed, the standout event of the month for many birdwatchers, was the **Starling** roost at Bubwith Ings which peaked at 300,000 towards the month end and provided some spectacular

dusk murmurations.

## February

The focus continued to be on wildfowl with a **Green-winged Teal** at Wheldrake Ings, two **Bewick's Swans** at Ellerton Ings and two **Scaup** at NDC on the 1st. The 1st also saw a **Great White Egret** at Wheldrake Ings and the **Caspian Gull** reappeared in the fields near Riccall. There were four **Tundra Bean Geese** at CHL on the 2nd (to the 14th) and another four at Wheldrake Ings from the 2nd to the 23rd. CHL also featured a **Cetti's Warbler** on the 2nd, the same date as a **Long-eared Owl** at Bank Island, which reappeared on the 4th. The 6th saw a **Kittiwake** at NDC and two **Caspian Gulls** at Rufforth. The fields near Riccall continued to attract interesting gulls with the juvenile **Iceland Gull** and a **Yellow-legged Gull** on the 7th and then a **Caspian Gull** on the 8th, with possibly the same **Caspian Gull** at Barlby on 15th and then at the Wheldrake roost on the 29th. Two **Ravens** flew north over Bank Island on the 9th and there was a new record count of 611 **Gadwall** in the LDV on the 11th. A **Great White Egret** was at Bolton Percy on the 13th and the same date saw a **Long-eared Owl** at Riccall. Two **Waxwings** were at Nether Poppleton on the 19th, with "several" at Naburn the next day. A **Glaucous Gull** in the Wheldrake Ings roost on the 21st was the only record this year. The 29th saw three **Mediterranean Gulls** and a **Yellow-legged Gull** at Wheldrake Ings, whilst the month saw impressive counts of 4000+ **Golden Plover** and 5000 **Lapwing** in the LDV.

## March

March opened with single **Mediterranean** and **Iceland Gulls** in the Wheldrake Ings roost on the 1st, a **Raven** at Ampleforth on the 2nd and a **Great White Egret** at Bank Island on the 4th and the 13th. A ringtail **Hen Harrier** was at Skipwith Common on the 5th and then intermittently to the 24th. The Yorkshire Arboretum again proved to be a prime site for **Hawfinches** with 15 on the 6th, 35 on the 8th, 32 on the 15th and reducing to two on the 21st. There was a suggestion of spring with **Woodlarks** singing at Skipwith and Strensall Commons on the 7th and **Chiffchaffs** singing at four sites on the 9th. The first **Sand Martins** were two at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th and a **Crane** was heard over Bank Island on the 13th. The same date saw three **Water Pipits** at Thornton Ings: two were still present on the 19th to the 23rd, with another two at Seavy Carr on the 15th. A **Green-winged Teal** was at Bubwith Ings on the 16th and the 18th, then reappeared at Ellerton Ings on the 21st before moving to NDC on the 24th where it remained until the 31st. A 2nd-calendar-year **White-tailed Eagle** over Bishop Wilton then Melbourne on the 26th was probably the most unexpected lockdown sighting and a magnificent first modern record for the recording area. The usual spring passage of **Whooper Swans** through the LDV peaked at 300+ on the 17th. Another LDV highlight was the arrival of **Black-tailed Godwits**, with 160 on the 19th and 195 on the 23rd. The first returning **Garganey** were three at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th. Waders continued in the LDV with three **Avocets** flying south on the 20th, the first returning **Little Ringed Plover** on the 22nd and a **Grey Plover** on the 26th. The

first **Swallows** were singles at Wheldrake Ings and Sherburn in Elmet on the 25th, a **Wheatear** was at Wheldrake on the 26th and a **Blackcap** singing at Bank Island on the 27th was likely to be a migrant.

### April

Birdwatchers hoping for a repeat of last year's overnight **Common Scoter** movements were rewarded on 31st March/1st April, again on 1st/2nd April and continuing to the 6th with hundreds of birds doubtless involved. The final sighting for this winter of the drake **Green-winged Teal** was at NDC on the 1st, a **Hen Harrier** was at Strensall Common on the 2nd and a **Mediterranean Gull** at Redhouse Reservoir. There were the anticipated summer arrivals with a **Willow Warbler** at Scoreby Wood on the 1st, **House Martins** at Wheldrake and Bishopthorpe on the 4th, whilst the 6th provided first sightings for **Cuckoo**, **Yellow Wagtail** and **Sedge Warbler**. A **Redstart** was at Heslington Tillmire on the 7th and a **Cetti's Warbler** singing at Haxby on the same day was a welcome new site for this species. A second-winter **Yellow-legged Gull** was at NDC on the 9th with an adult there on the 12th. The 10th saw first records for **Garden Warbler** and **Hobby**, whilst both **Whitethroat** and **Lesser Whitethroat** appeared the next day. The first **Osprey** of the spring was seen at Ellerton on the 12th and **Ring Ouzels** were recorded at Seaton Ross and Crockey Hill. More first dates included **Whinchat** on the 14th, **Tree Pipit** and a **Blue-headed Wagtail** on the 15th, **Pied Flycatcher** on the 16th, **Reed Warbler** on the 17th and the first **Swift** on the 18th. Three **Cranes** were at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th, **Ring Ouzels** were reported at Brighton and Langwith Stray and an **Osprey** was at Pool Bridge Farm on the 21st, when a **Grasshopper Warbler** was reeling near Selby. The first **Common Terns** were two at Redhouse Lagoon on the 23rd and a **Ring Ouzel** was at Bolton Percy from the 24th to the 26th. Two **Cranes** flew high to the north over New Earswick on the 25th and a **Red-rumped Swallow** was an exciting find at Acaster Malbis on the same date. An **Osprey** was at Clifton Ings on the 26th. The only **Arctic Terns** of the year were three north at Wheldrake Ings on the 29th and one northeast at Bank Island the next day. The traditional spring **Whimbrel** roost peaked at 76 on the 29th. The last day of April saw the first **Spotted Flycatcher** at Bolton Percy.

### May

The 1st saw an **Osprey** over Crockey Hill, while a gathering of 500+ **Swifts** over Wheldrake Ings indicated a significant arrival of this species and a **Yellow-legged Gull** was seen there the next day. The first **Turtle Doves** turned up at Hovingham and at Gilling East on the 3rd, with one heard near Cawton on the 14th. A **Cetti's Warbler** singing at Barlby on the 4th was another new site for this species. A **Wood Sandpiper** was at NDC on the 6th, though overall it was a poor month for wader passage. An adult male **Red-footed Falcon** feeding with 11 **Hobbies** over the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th must have been quite a sight. A **Great White Egret** was at Thornton on the 13th, the first **Nightjar** was churring at Skipwith Common on the 19th and there were three there on the 21st. A **Quail**

was at East Cottingwith on the 19th and an **Osprey** appeared at Melbourne on the 20th and again on the 26th, with possibly the same bird over Wheldrake Ings on the 27th and Skipwith Common on the 28th. A **Mediterranean Gull** was following the plough at Pocklington Canal, Thornton Lock on the 21st. The month closed with a **Crane** over Bank Island on the 25th, a **Great White Egret** at Strensall Common on the 27th and three **Cranes** over Skipwith on the 28th.

### June

With spring migration largely complete, June was a quieter month. One highlight was an influx of **Quail**, with arrivals in the LDV around the 3rd and again from 23rd - 25th; in total, 23 singing males were located. A **Long-eared Owl** was at Strensall Common on the 2nd, on the 7th a **Crane** was over Skipwith Common, with two over Staynor Hall, Selby the same day. A **Great White Egret** was at Rawcliffe on the 11th and an unseasonal **Knot** was at Bank Island on the 12th and the 13th. The 16th brought news of a first-summer **Red-footed Falcon** near Biggin. First seen by the farmer on the 11th it stayed until the 20th and was widely appreciated. Observers drawn by the falcon reported a **Mediterranean Gull** nearby on the 17th and two **Ravens** overhead on the same day. What may have been the same **Red-footed Falcon**\* was reported at Pool Bridge Farm, Crockey Hill on the 21st and 22nd. A **Crane** over Melbourne on the 26th was later over Foggathorpe and a **Turtle Dove** flew over Bank Island on the 29th. A gathering of gulls in a potato field near Riccall on the 30th included four **Yellow-legged Gulls**.

### July

The count of four **Yellow-legged Gulls** which closed June at Riccall was matched on 1st July, followed by three there on the 7th and five on the 12th. An adult **Mediterranean Gull** was at Ozendyke Ings on the 3rd, with a **Knot** there the next day and then five **Mediterranean Gulls** on the 10th and a **Wood Sandpiper** on the 11th. A **Mediterranean Gull** was at Bank Island on the 11th and a **Pied Flycatcher** was a pleasant surprise in an Acomb garden on the 17th. There were almost daily sightings of **Garganey** in the LDV after an excellent breeding season. Two **Cranes** went south over East Cottingwith on the 18th, but a **White-tailed Eagle** which roosted overnight at Ellerton on the 19th would have slipped through unnoticed if it hadn't been tracked by the Isle of Wight reintroduction project. Wheldrake Ings had a **Great White Egret** on the 25th, with one at NDC on the 30th and 31st, with a **Bittern** also present on the latter date. Perhaps the most notable event at the end of the month was a fall of 'chats' at NDC on the 30th and 31st which saw record numbers of 31 **Whinchat** and 15+ **Stonechats** recorded.

### August

The eye-opener at the start of the month was two **Black Kites** at Wheldrake Ings on the 2nd – only the second record for the York area. It's a sign of the times that **Great White Egrets** on the 1st (Wheldrake Ings), 3rd (NDC) and 6th (Bolton Percy) were almost expected. A **Crane** was at Bank Island on the 7th. **Nightjars** appeared away from the established sites with two at Healaugh on the 8th, and a

single at Sand Hutton on the 18th. The LDV continued to attract quality birds with a **Cattle Egret\*** at Ellerton on the 11th and a **Knot** at Wheldrake Ings on the 15th. An **Osprey** flew south at Copmanthorpe on the 23rd, with it or another at Elvington the next day. Wader passage was unremarkable but included a **Wood Sandpiper** at Bank Island on the 25th. Two intriguing records involved birds not seen alive – the feathers of a juvenile **Arctic Skua** (presumed to be a Peregrine kill) were found in York on the 27th and a young **White-tailed Eagle** was tracked by the Isle of Wight Reintroduction Project as it passed across the northwest of the Club area on the 31st. More observers were able to connect with an obliging juvenile **Kittiwake** at Heslington West on the 30th and 31st and a **Mediterranean Gull** was at NDC on the 31st.

### September

The young **Kittiwake** at Heslington East remained until the 3rd. Another young **White-tailed Eagle** was then tracked on the 3rd as it passed unseen on a line Rufforth - Copmanthorpe - Bubwith - Howden. Wheldrake produced a good count of 150+ **Yellow Wagtails** at dusk on the 5th, and the 6th produced a **Raven** at Sherburn in Elmet and a **Black Redstart** at NDC. An **Osprey** was at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th, with another at **Thorganby** on the 18th. The 9th and 10th saw a **Cattle Egret\*** at Low Grounds, with it or another at Ellerton Ings on the 16th, and the 9th saw the first returning **Pink-footed Geese** with a skein of 26 over Bank Island. **Yellow-legged Gulls** appeared near Riccall on the 12th and Brumber Hill on the 14th, 19th and 21st. Records of **Cetti's Warblers** at Wistow Clough and Heslington East in the middle of the month were new sites for this species. Interesting wader records all came from the LDV with **Knot** and **Curlew Sandpiper** at NDC at the start of the month, and two **Spotted Redshanks** at Wheldrake Ings on the 24th. The first **Jack Snipe** record of the autumn involved six at Bank Island on the 16th, and were preceded by the first **Whooper Swans**, with seven at Bank Island at dawn on the 14th. Bank Island had a flurry of records with a **Great White Egret** on the 16th and a **Redwing** and an immature **Gannet** over on the 17th. Additional **Great White Egret** records were one at Wheldrake Ings on the 17th and two at Thorganby on the 18th and NDC on the 21st. To prove there are birds to be found away from the LDV, a **Short-eared Owl** was at Clifton Backies on the 22nd and the 23rd, two **Hawfinches** at Newburgh Priory on the 24th and a **Hoopoe** at Elvington, then Nether Poppleton on the 26th. A **Crane** was calling at Bank Island on the 28th and a **Raven** was seen near Selby on the 29th. The month finished on a high with the first **Common Rosefinch** for the York area, a juvenile trapped and ringed at Bank Island on the 29th.

### October

The good run at Bank Island continued in October with a **Lesser Yellowlegs** from the 1st to the 3rd. A **Great White Egret** was at Foston Grange Farm on the 3rd and there were intermittent sightings of up to two birds across the Club area throughout October. A **Hoopoe** appeared at Scrayingham on the 4th and the 5th saw an **Osprey** at Ozendyke Ings and two **Hawfinches** at Gilling East. Another

**Hawfinch** flew southeast over Wheldrake Ings on the 6th; singles were at Newburgh Priory on the 11th and the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 22nd, plus two at Gilling East on the 30th. The first **Fieldfares** of the autumn were 165 northwest over Bank Island on the 11th, with the first **Brambling** over Bolton Percy Ings on the 13th, the same day that a movement of **Barnacle Geese** across the country included 43 coming into roost at Bank Island. A **Long-eared Owl** was at Summerfield Nursery, Upper Poppleton on the 16th. The 17th produced six **Yellow-legged Gulls** near North Duffield and a **Rock Pipit** was at NDC on the 19th with another at Bank Island on the 21st. Good numbers of **Skylarks** included 264 mostly south over Ellerton on the 20th, 233 south over Ellerton on the 22nd and 350 at East Cottingham on the 24th. The only **Green-winged Teal** of the second winter period was at Ellerton Ings on the 22nd and a ringtail **Hen Harrier** was at Thorganby on the 22nd and the 23rd, with a **Raven** at Elvington Airfield on the latter date and another at Rufforth Tip on the 29th. A **Bearded Tit** was a good find at Bank Island on the 25th. An impressive 7100 **Pink-footed Geese** and 212 **Whooper Swans** moved through the LDV in October. Twenty-three **Tundra Bean Geese** were at Wheldrake Ings on the 26th and the 31st.

### November

Sightings of **Great White Egrets** continued to be a theme in November; as usual most were in the LDV, but with others in the west of the Club area. A **Yellow-legged Gull** was near Riccall in the first half of the month, with a **Mediterranean Gull** at NDC on the 4th and the 5th. A **Short-eared Owl** was seen at NDC on the 2nd and again on the 14th and the 15th. A **Bearded Tit** appeared at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd and the morning of the 4th saw 4760 **Woodpigeons** flying south at Bank Island and 10,530 at Bolton Percy Ings. The 6th featured a **Crane** over Bank Island and 500 **Skylarks** in stubble fields at Wheldrake, with a **Short-eared Owl** at Wheldrake Ings the next day. **Hawfinches** were present in single figures at Gilling East and the Yorkshire Arboretum. Raptors included **Hen Harriers** near Malton on the 16th, at Skipwith and Strensall Commons on the 27th, and **Goshawks** at Ellerton on the 21st and at Thorganby on the 30th. Six **Cetti's Warblers** were wintering in the LDV and up to 50 **Tree Sparrows** were on feeders at the NNR Base, but passerine of the month was a **Firecrest** near Askham Bog on the 22nd. It was a good month for geese in the LDV with seven species recorded, including a record 3600 **Greylag Geese**, up to 5000 **Pink-footed Geese**, 25 **Tundra Bean Geese** (four flocks), 14 **White-fronted Geese** and a single **Barnacle Goose**.

### December

The month opened with three **Great White Egrets** north over Bank Island and a **Long-eared Owl** at Skipwith Common on the 1st and again on the 21st. A **Great White Egret** was at Coxwold on the 6th, a **Short-eared Owl** at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th and a male **Hen Harrier** appeared intermittently at Strensall Common from the 6th to the 24th. As usual the LDV did well for raptors with at least six **Marsh Harriers**, three or four **Peregrines**, a **Red Kite** and one or



two **Merlins**. The 9th saw 60-70 **White-fronted Geese** flying west over Heslington. Rarity of the month, and indeed the year, was a **Franklin's Gull** found at NDC on the 12th and relocated at Thorganby on the 13th; not surprisingly this was the first for the Club area. The 12th saw a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** and two **Hawfinch** at Newburgh Priory. On the 14th a **Bewick's Swan** was found at Ellerton and 202 **Pied Wagtails** were counted on fields near Riccall where abattoir waste had been spread and attracted insects. The 15th saw a **Mediterranean Gull** in the Wheldrake Ings roost, a late **Common Sandpiper** at Ulleskelf Mires and a **Knot** was at NDC from the 17th to the 22nd. There were **Short-eared Owl** sightings at Rufforth Tip from the 20th, with two there on the 31st. An adult **Caspian Gull** was at Acaster Malbis on the 29th. Wintering **Blackcaps** continued to be recorded with birds at six different locations. As usual wintering wildfowl and waders were concentrated on the LDV. Eight goose species included a single **Tundra Bean Goose**, up to 21 **White-fronts**, 100 **Barnacles** and nine **Egyptian Geese**. Other counts included 7000 **Wigeon**, 6500 **Teal** and a notable 633 **Pintail**. Wader numbers varied but included 4700 **Golden Plover**, 3000 **Lapwing**, 120 **Dunlin**, 88 **Ruff**, 18 **Curlew**, 13 **Black-tailed Godwits** and the first returning **Oystercatcher** on the 29th.



**Cuckoo** © Tom Broxup

## YOC CLASSIFIED LIST

The sequence and scientific nomenclature follow that of the British List maintained by the British Ornithologists' Union, currently the 9th edition published in 2017. 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 YOC list is also tabulated on page 154.

An indication of presence in Breeding Bird Survey squares during the 2020 season is shown in the classified list as BBS x/33 where x is the number of squares where the species was noted, while 33 is the total of BBS 1km squares/WBBS transects covered – there were 30 BBS and 3 WBBS. The BTO/JNCC/RSPB Breeding Bird Survey is a partnership jointly funded by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), with fieldwork conducted by volunteers. Owing to COVID restrictions, only the second visit was possible and ten squares (9 BBS and 1 WBBS) were not covered at all. Numbers in brackets show coverage in 2019. It should be noted that 75% coverage in the region was substantially higher than for the country as a whole.

<b>SE57</b> BBS 3 (3)	<b>SE67</b> BBS 2 (3)	<b>SE77</b> BBS 0 (2)
<b>SE56</b> BBS 0	<b>SE66</b> BBS 2 (3)	<b>SE76</b> BBS 7 (8) WBBS 1 (1)
<b>SE55</b> BBS 1 (2)	<b>SE65</b> BBS 3 (4)	<b>SE75</b> BBS 2 (2)
<b>SE54</b> BBS 2 (3) WBBS 1 (2)	<b>SE64</b> BBS 3 (3)	<b>SE74</b> BBS 1 (1) WBBS 1 (1)
<b>SE53</b> BBS 0	<b>SE63</b> BBS 2 (2)	<b>SE73</b> BBS 2 (3)

Number of BBS 1km squares/WBBS transects in each hectad (10km x 10km) – 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 (with LNR to denote Local Nature Reserve)
OGP	Old Gravel Pits

SHL	National Agri-Food Innovation Campus (NAFIC), 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:

Acomb Wood LNR, Cali Heath NR (Barmby Moor), Cornfield NR (Rawcliffe Ings), Hassacarr NR (Dunnington)

The Heslington East campus of the University of York is referred to as 'Heslington East' 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 of York comprise the combined totals for Heslington East and Heslington West (HES). In these tables '-' indicates that no count was made (in April prevented owing to national lockdown); zero counts are shown as '0'. Any other noteworthy counts are referred to in the text.

Dates for WeBS counts in 2020

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	12th	8th	8th	-	17th	7th	5th	23rd	20th	15th	15th	14th
<b>LDV</b>	<b>11th</b>	<b>8th</b>	<b>8th</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>14th</b>	<b>13th</b>
<b>HES</b>	11th	8th	11th	-	12th	7th	8th	26th	27th	18th	19th	14th

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 126.

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 2020. 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.

**Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla*

YOC Amber listed

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant

None in 2020, after records in six of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*

Naturalised breeder and winter visitor

BBS 2/33

During the first winter period the peak count was 503 in the LDV on 26th

January, with monthly maxima of 335 in February and 123 in March (both WeBS counts), reducing to just 24 present on 22nd April, while 335 at CHL was the highest count on 8th February.

The first young were reported on 9th May on the River Wharfe near Ulleskelf, while breeding was also confirmed at Acaster Malbis, Bolton Percy Ings, Brumber Hill, Heslington West (four pairs), Riccall, Rowntree Park and Skipwith Common.

Post breeding, 372 at CHL in July was the annual peak count there and up to 127 were at Heslington East during August. Also in August, 55 were at Rowntree Park on the 4th with the same number at Newburgh Priory on the 8th and 300 at Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on the 22nd. On 19th September, 120 were still at Scagglethorpe Lane, with 151 at Heslington East during the month. During October, 300 were at Heslington East on the 20th and 200 at Bank Island on the 30th and 31st, where 260 were present on 3rd November. During November, 100 roosted at Milford Common on the 24th and 311 were present in the LDV on the 27th. Peak counts during December included 220 at CHL and 326 in the LDV (both WeBS), 150 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 11th and 75 at Redhouse Reservoir on the 22nd.

Monthly WeBS counts for Canada Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	77	335	123	-	16	157	372	3	197	6	116	220
<b>LDV</b>	471	188	103								278	326
<b>HES</b>	12	38	26	-	19	44	54	127	151	130	98	1

Note: Most HES birds on Hes East apart from May, June, July

**Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*

*Amber listed*

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

Due to the presence of the free-flying flock at the University of York, it can be difficult to confirm the status of birds occurring away from this site.

In January, eight at Wheldrake Ings left south on the 4th and one was at CHL the next day. On 24th January 21 flew over Wheldrake Ings, with 25 at Aughton the next day and 19 circled Wheldrake Ings on the 26th before leaving south. The only other record for the first winter period was of four at NDC on 6th February.

In October, 43 flew into roost at Bank Island on the 13th which coincided with large movements elsewhere in the country. On the 22nd a single was at Bolton Percy Ings and three were at Castle Howard Lake. On 5th November a single was found with the Pink-footed Goose flock at North Duffield, remaining to the 15th. Then from the 17th to 19th December a flock of 96 toured the LDV, being initially seen at NDC and then at Thornton and Wheldrake Ings. Finally in December, seven were at Aughton Ings on the 27th with 23 there the following day.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*

*Amber listed*

*Naturalised breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant*

*BBS 17/33*

Well reported throughout the year from the area's water bodies and river systems. The LDV once again held the largest numbers, with record-breaking

numbers again present during December, while counts were higher at CHL at the end of the year compared to 2019, as were counts at Heslington East in late autumn/early winter. During the first winter period and early spring, monthly maxima from these sites were all WeBS counts (see table below). Elsewhere, the only count above 150 was 160 at Bolton Percy Ings on 18th January.

Breeding was widely reported with the first young seen at the Knavesmire on 21st March. Lockdown resulted in a pair choosing a flower bed in the main entrance of York train station to nest in. A full count of the LDV on 22nd April located 207 adults and 76 goslings. Breeding was also confirmed at Acaster Malbis (three pairs and 14 goslings), Bolton Percy Ings (20 goslings from two broods), Foggathorpe, Heslington East (three pairs with four goslings), Heslington West (one pair, one gosling), Moor Monkton (eight adults with 14 goslings), Naburn (pair with ten goslings) and Redhouse (15 adults with 37 goslings).

Post breeding flocks were reported from June with 102 (in the creche) at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th and 185 at Heslington West on the 19th. 300 were at Heslington East on 31st July. August saw flocks of 126 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 8th with 580 at Heslington East on the 15th. Flocks commuted between Heslington and the LDV, where counts included 387 at Heslington East on the 3rd and 1000 at Low Grounds on the 9th. On 19th September 350 were at Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton. Counts continued to increase during October with 300 at Newburgh Priory on the 11th, 220 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 14th, 900 at Heslington East on the 20th, 2000 at Bank Island/Wheldrake Ings on the 28th and 250 at Scagglethorpe Lane on the 31st. On 2nd November 3000 roosted at Bank Island, while 3600 counted in the LDV on the 11th was a reserve record. Also in November, 700 were still at Heslington East on the 1st, while along the Wharfe counts included 450 at Ryther Ings on the 5th and 1080 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 22nd. In December the peak counts were 1600 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 11th, 3026 in the LDV on the 13th and 513 at Redhouse Reservoir on the 22nd.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Greylag Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	233	32	21	-	49	413	620	168	544	120	4	263
<b>LDV</b>	1847	768	187								2367	3026
<b>HES</b>	61	90	98	-	38	210	214	356	263	537	417	20

Note: HES birds mostly on HES East from August onwards

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

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and winter visitor*

The York area continues to host a wintering population which is likely part of increasing numbers present on the Humber. These regularly feed on the Wolds. There are also regular movements recorded between this species' main wintering grounds in Lancashire and the Wash. A summary of monthly passage birds seen heading northwest/west during the first winter period and east/southeast in the latter half of the year is shown in the table below:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2592	783	2100	220	1807	8034	1775	372

In January peak passage occurred on the 11th when 928 headed north-west with 100 also seen over Fulford and 70 flew southeast over Acomb. After light passage during February numbers increased during March with an impressive skein of 1000 seen over the LDV and York on the 4th.

Smaller flocks wintering in the area in January included 60 at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd, 52 at Riccall on the 13th and 33 at Brumber Hill on the 15th. March saw 30 at Bolton Percy on the 14th with 73 at Brumber Hill the next day. A flock of 66 was present at Aughton Ings to 1st April with 47 at Wheldrake on the 3rd and 70 from the 4th to 7th April. The flock of 70 may have been the flock seen heading northwest over Haxby on the 8th. On 7th April 150 flew northwest over Copmanthorpe. A late flock of 56 was at Wheldrake Ings on the 22nd to the 26th, with two at NDC on 29th April. In May, two were at Bank Island on the 6th, and one on the 14th.

Autumn passage started on 9th September with 26 southeast over Bank Island, followed by 40 over Fulford and Wheldrake Ings and 102 south over Wistow Clough the next day. Passage increased during the month with a peak on the 25th of 90 over Acomb and 389 over Wheldrake Ings. Passage peaked during October including 1600 seen over Stamford Bridge and the LDV on the 2nd and 1675 over the LDV on the 16th. Also, during the month, 2000 were at Spaldington on the 17th with 1136 throughout the LDV on the 28th. Light passage occurred during November, when the LDV held impressive numbers, with peaks of 1100 at Spaldington on the 5th, while counts in the fields at North Duffield included 1538 on the 9th and 2000 at NDC on the 12th. It was estimated that up to 5000 were roosting on the Humber and then feeding in the southern end of the LDV during the day. Numbers remained high during December including 800 roosting at Bank Island on the 3rd, 300 at Copmanthorpe on the 9th (and 200 there on the 22nd) and 400 at Seaton Ross on the 22nd.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Pink-footed Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	928										1735	46

#### Tundra Bean Goose *Anser serrirostris*

YOC

#### Scarce winter visitor

In January, three were at Bank Island on the 9th before flying towards Storwood. Four were at Hagg Bridge on the 11th with presumably the same birds at Wheldrake Ings the next day. This group was regularly reported from Wheldrake Ings until 8th February. Six were in the Hagg Bridge/Wheldrake area on 14th January with five on the 16th, while a family party of seven was at North Duffield Ings on 18th-19th January. At CHL, four different birds were present during February on the 2nd, 5th, 7th and 14th. The last of the winter were four on the refuge at Wheldrake Ings on 23rd February.

On 23rd October a flock of 23 was at Wheldrake Ings, flying off at dusk towards Bank Island. The same flock was then seen heading east over Wheldrake Ings on 31st October. On 6th November, five were at Bank Island with ten south over Ellerton and three over South Duffield. On 12th November, eight flew east over Bank Island. The final report of the year was of a single calling whilst heading south over Wheldrake Ings on 15th December.

**White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* YOC Red listed  
*Scarce winter visitor – all Russian breeding population albifrons unless specified*

A family party of eight present at the end of 2019 remained at Bank Island on the 1st and 2nd January. The next day, 26 arrived from the east and headed onto Wheldrake Ings, with another 14 at Melbourne. Numbers in the LDV increased to 62 on the 5th with 47 at Bank Island on the 9th and 16 there on the 10th when 22 were at Melbourne. Numbers in the LDV peaked at 79 on the 13th with 48 still present on the 19th and 24 remaining on the 25th and 26th. On the 29th, six were at Melbourne and 15 at Wheldrake Ings on the 31st. The only records during February were of six still at Melbourne on the 1st, with singles at NDC on 21st and at Wheldrake Ings on 23rd, the last of the winter.

During the autumn there was a national influx. In October the first returning bird was a single at NDC on the 28th and six flew over Bank Island on the 31st. The only records during November were 14 over Bank Island on the 5th and a juvenile with the Pink-footed Goose flock at NDC the next day. Reports increased during December. On the 3rd, four were at Bank Island, when nine were seen heading for Wheldrake Ings. Two at NDC on the 5th were then present from the 11th to the 22nd, with a single there on the 24th and 29th. 21 were present at Melbourne on the 8th, while the next day birds were heard calling as a flock of 70 passed west over Heslington. One was at Bolton Percy Ings on the 13th, while back in the LDV, 16 present included nine at Wheldrake Ings and six at Sutton upon Derwent.

**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor* Amber listed  
*Resident breeder, passage migrant and winter visitor* BBS 3/33

Away from the main sites of CHL, where peak monthly counts during the year were all WeBS (see table), and the LDV, Kirkby Wharfe held 18 on 10th January, with 19 on 6th February and a peak of 32 on 21st March. The largest count in the LDV was 48 at NDC on 6th February. In April, 114 in the LDV on the 3rd included 61 at NDC, with 99 non-breeders still in the LDV on the 29th. During May, 88 non-breeders were still in the valley on the 11th.

Breeding was confirmed at Bank Island (four young), Bolton Percy Ings (six young), Derwenthorpe (three young), Gilling East (seven young), River Foss, York (five young), Pocklington Canal between Canal Head and Coates Bridge (nine young), Pocklington Canal, Thornton Lock (six young), Wheldrake Ings (five young) and Yearsley Moor (nine young). A total of 13 pairs bred in the LDV and at least one pair bred at CHL, however the Heslington East pair's clutch failed.

Post breeding, August saw 14 at Heslington East on the 15th and 18 in the LDV on the 31st, with numbers increasing there to 71 by 30th September. At CHL



the year's peak count of 63 came in August and September. In October 11 were at Welham Bridge Carrs on the 22nd and 89 in the LDV by the 31st – this number remaining to the end of the year. During November 11 were at Bolton Percy Ings on the 9th and 39 were along the Pocklington Canal on the 16th (including three of the families). 21 were at Bolton Percy Ings on 27th December – including a family of six on the river.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Mute Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	25	28	27		32	48	58	63	63	60	58	53
<b>LDV</b>	129	107	92								-	89
<b>HES</b>	10	5	4	-	4	11	12	10	6	9	2	2

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

YOC Amber listed

*Scarce visitor and passage migrant*

The pair, including the colour-ringed bird '702' present at the end of December 2019, remained in the LDV until 1st February and were seen at Ellerton Ings, Bubwith Ings, Derwent Cottage Farm and NDC during their stay. The only other record was of a single adult with the Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* herd at Ellerton Ings from the 14th to 17th December.

#### **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*

Amber listed

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

The nationally important LDV wintering herd was again concentrated at the southern end favouring NDC, Aughton Ings and Bubwith Ings. In February a peak count of 142 included 121 in this area with 21 wintering in the Melbourne/Thornton area. Away from the LDV, January saw two at Kirkby Wharfe from the 3rd to the 10th, and one at Bolton Percy Ings on the 27th. In February one was seen along the River Wharfe on the 6th and 8th, while 15 flew southwest at Naburn on the 6th.

Spring passage through the LDV saw a record 1761 heading north including 98 during February, 1510 (in addition to the wintering herd) during March and a further 151 in April. Elsewhere in the area, 998 were logged on passage during March, but are likely to have included some of the LDV birds. During March the peak passage days were the 7th when 467 passed north, including 376 through the LDV, coinciding with reports of a large movement throughout Yorkshire. On the 14th, 372 included 159 over Bolton Percy Ings, while on the 16th, a total of 346 included 285 through the LDV. The 17th saw 254 north over the LDV with an additional 212 in fields by Derwent Cottage Farm and 96 over Newburgh Priory contributed to a day total of 472 in the area. After 71 north over Bank Island early on the 20th, when 100 still remained at Bubwith, and six flying north off Wheldrake at dusk, there was a major clear out on the 21st with just 26 remaining at Bubwith. Reports of passage birds decreased although 63 flew northwest over Bolton Percy Ings on the 22nd. In April, 19 flew north over Heslington East on the 4th, the same day as 38 were at Thorganby Ings. Following 20 at Wheldrake Ings on the 10th and 33 at NDC the next day numbers decreased to just a singleton at NDC by the

month end. In May, three were at NDC to the 6th, with one remaining thereafter which summered in the LDV. Still present in August, a second individual appeared at NDC on the 17th, with just the single on the river thereafter.

September saw the first returning birds, with seven at Bank Island and four south at Bubwith Bridge on the 26th and 14 at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th. Passage increased during October including 33 south at Poppleton on the 10th, eight in fields at Catterton from the 14th to 17th and 50 near Shipton on the 22nd. During October 212 passed south through the LDV, including 56 on the 10th and 52 at Thornton Ellers on the 14th. By the end of the month 30 were back at NDC. At NDC, 94 were present on 3rd November, with 104 there by the month end. Also during November, 30 flew east at Gilling on the 8th and 24 over Nether Poppleton on the 12th, while 16 were at Heslington East on the 19th. In December, 88 were wintering in the LDV, while eight were at Bolton Percy Ings on the 13th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Whooper Swan

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	196	109	121								61	88

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

*Scarce visitor and naturalised breeder in small numbers*

A small breeding population continues to be present in the LDV, where they are resident around various ponds in the East Cottingwith, Storwood and Melbourne areas. Up to three were present in this area during January. On 26th February a pair with eight newly hatched goslings was seen crossing Kidd Lane at Melbourne. Eight adults were in the East Cottingwith area on the 8th and 22nd March. A pair was at Foggathorpe on 7th March, with two at Thornton Ings on the 13th. On 30th April a pair was at Bank Island. Breeding was confirmed at Foggathorpe on the 6th when a pair with two young was present, which were also at Seaton Ross on the 16th. A single flew west at Thorganby Ings on the 16th, with four at Bank Island, two at Wheldrake Ings and two at Hessay Pond all on the 26th. During June a pair with two newly hatched young was at East Cottingwith, while a single was at Bank Island on the 12th and five flew over Wheldrake Ings on the 24th. Birds remained in the East Cottingwith area during the summer. In the autumn, there were seven on 19th September, with 12 on 24th October the largest count of the year. Also in October, singles were at Heslington East on the 19th and at Ellerton Ings on the 20th and 22nd. In November, two were at NDC on the 11th, with six still at East Cottingwith on the 14th and two at Melbourne on the 22nd. Finally in December, a single flew south over Bolton Percy Ings on the 10th, four were at Melbourne on the 14th, two at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th and 28th and seven at East Cottingwith, also on the 28th.

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

*Amber listed*

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

*BBS 3/33*

Numbers at the beginning of the year in the LDV were higher than those seen

during 2019, with peaks of 132 on 11th January, including 42 at Ellerton, 154 on 8th February, including 69 at NDC, and up to 130 during March when several pairs were on territories away from the Ings. At Newburgh Priory up to five were present during January and March, while along the Wharfe during this period numbers increased during March with a peak of 24 at Wharfe Ings on the 19th. In April seven were at Acaster Malbis on the 8th, with 80 males roosting in the LDV during the month. During May, 87 present in the LDV included 76 at Thorganby and there was a count of ten at Heslington East on the 27th.

Breeding was confirmed at Elvington, where a pair with seven young was seen walking through a garden before heading down the Main Street, and at Newburgh Priory (six young). During the breeding season pairs were present at Acaster Airfield, Bolton Percy Ings, Catterton, Copmanthorpe, Heslington East, Hessay Pond, Moor Monkton, Naburn, Seaton Ross and Strensall Common but breeding was not confirmed.

There was some evidence of movement during June with three at Hemingbrough Quarry on the 16th and 11 at Newburgh Priory on the 24th. In July, four juveniles on the 11th at the Lower Wharfe were thought to have bred elsewhere, while an adult with six young flew into Wheldrake Ings at dusk on the 22nd. The only August record was of two at Ozendyke Ings, while the first returning birds to the LDV came on 13th September, with two at Wheldrake Ings to the 15th and a single remaining until the 22nd. The next arrival wasn't until 28th October with five at Bank Island, increasing to 35 throughout the LDV by the month end and 69 present by 15th November. During November, 63 were caught and ringed in the LDV. During December, three were at Newburgh Priory, while numbers continued to increase in the LDV with 76 on the 13th and 133 present on the 28th, including 55 at Ellerton Ings.

Monthly WeBS counts for Shelduck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	132	154	87								57	76

**Mandarin Duck** *Aix galericulata*

*Scarce resident breeder (Introduced/Category C)*

*BBS 1/33*

CHL continues to be the stronghold for this species in the York area, with a record 113 counted on the lake on 2nd February. Numbers are also increasing along the area's main river systems. On 25th February, a pair was at Ozendyke Ings, the first report away from CHL. During March, two pairs were at Thorganby from the 1st to the 4th with a male remaining into April, while up to four were at Beningbrough during March and a female at Bolton Percy on the 19th and 26th.

In April and May, up to five were reported from the River Ouse at Redhouse, Beningbrough and Newton-on-Ouse, with breeding confirmed at Beningbrough on 17th May when a brood of 13 was found. Also in May, two males were at Bank Island on the 17th with a single seen there and at Wheldrake Ings during June. Breeding was also confirmed at Bolton Percy Ings where a female with four large young was present on 8th August. On 5th July 68 were at CHL (WeBS) and 51

there on 20th August.

During September and October, four remained at Bolton Percy Ings and a single was at Wheldrake Ings on 13th September. Singles were at Newburgh Priory on the 11th and 25th October and eight at Castle Howard on 25th November. In December, two were at Newburgh Priory on the 6th, one at Moor Monkton on the 7th and a male at Heslington West remained into the New Year.

**Garganey** *Spatula querquedula*  
*Scarce migrant breeder*

YOC Amber listed

Another excellent year in the LDV. The first returning birds (two females and a drake) were recorded at Wheldrake Ings on 19th March, the same day as a report from Thorganby Ings. At the end of the month another pair was present in front of Garganey Hide, NDC on the 31st. The drake and two ducks were still present at Wheldrake Ings on 4th April when a single pair was also seen at NDC. A pair remained at Wheldrake Ings on the 15th. By the end of April seven pairs were recorded throughout the LDV, with two at Bank Island and NDC and three at Wheldrake Ings on the 30th. In the LDV during May a further two pairs were located and there were daily reports from Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings where up to five males and three females were present. The only record away from the LDV was of a male on the river Wharfe at Bolton Percy Ings on 7th May.

During June the first young were seen from the 12th with another two broods also seen. See RBBP report on page 126. At Wheldrake Ings a brood of five large ducklings remained on the pool from 28th June until 21st July, with six on the 11th and two remaining to the month end. The only records during August were of a single on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st and 25th with two there on the 3rd. The last of the year was one on Low Grounds on the 4th and 5th September.

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

Amber listed

The LDV held internationally important numbers during the first winter period, where 246 on 3rd January increased to 441 by the 11th. In February 297 on the 8th included 100 at NDC and 120 at Wheldrake Ings. On 25th March 311 were still present, while 301 on 8th April included 220 at Wheldrake Ings. Away from the LDV, only small numbers were reported. Two were at Heslington East on 13th January, while two at Acaster Airfield on 25th February were a site first for the observer. In March, four were at Acaster South Ings on the 7th with two there on the 26th. The peak count along the Lower Wharfe during the first winter period was 16 at Wharfe Ings on 19th March. On 16th March three were at Clifton Ings.

At the end of April 90 pairs were present in the LDV with numbers decreasing during May, while the first broods were seen during June and further broods appeared in July. See RBBP report on page 126.

During August, up to seven were at Wheldrake Ings, with a pair at Skipwith Common on the 9th, six there on the 31st, a single at Heslington East on the 14th and five at Ozendyke Ings on the 27th. Birds started to return to the LDV during September, with 17 at Bank Island on the 2nd increasing to 38 throughout the site

by the month end. Six were present at Heslington East on 3rd September, with up to three there during October and November. Also in November, five were at Naburn on 9th November, the same day as five flew northeast over York Minster, while a single was at Middlethorpe Ings on the 16th. The peak counts along the Lower Wharfe during the second winter period came from Bolton Percy Ings with 29 on 31st October, 55 on 2nd November and 15 on 20th December. By the end of October numbers in the LDV had increased to just 48 by the month end, while 16 were at Skipwith Common on the 24th. A count of 63 in the LDV on 14th November included 49 at Bank Island. On 7th December, 63 were at Wheldrake Ings.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Shoveler

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	441	297	164								63	62

#### **Gadwall** *Mareca strepera*

*Amber listed*

*Winter visitor and migrant breeder*

*BBS x/33*

In the LDV, January saw numbers increase from 180 to 513 by 26th January, including 374 at Wheldrake Ings. By 11th February, an internationally important 611 were present, a new site record. Numbers decreased during March to 172 on the 8th due to flooding, but 366 were present on the 25th. During April 142 were at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd with 117 pairs present throughout the site on the 22nd. Smaller numbers were recorded elsewhere with peak site counts of 11 at Newburgh Priory on 1st February, 11 at Kirkby Wharfe on 21st March and nine at Heslington East on 11th April. Only single figure counts were received from CHL.

In the LDV during the breeding season a pursuit flight of 35 birds at NDC on 23rd April included 32 drakes, suggesting females were on eggs, with a single female found incubating a clutch of nine at Wheldrake Ings on the same date. Up to 71 pairs were present in early May, however by June it was apparent it was a relatively poor breeding season with just 47 ducklings noted from six broods, with a late brood at NDC on 31st July. See RBBP report on page 126. Elsewhere in the area a pair successfully bred at Heslington East, while there was an interesting report of three males chasing a female over Sherburn in Elmet on 9th May although there was no further evidence of breeding there.

Post breeding only small numbers were reported, including 12 at Ozendyke Ings on 30th August. During September, numbers began to increase in the LDV with 53 on the 21st, rising to 63 by the end of October, but just 42 on 14th November, after which flooding in December brought 80 by the month end. Counts towards the end of the year at CHL were significantly higher than in 2019 with 122 in December. In the second winter period peak counts from elsewhere in the area included in November 26 at Newburgh Priory on the 6th, 16 at Wharfe Ings on the 10th and 20 at Heslington East on the 15th while 20 were at Bolton Percy Ings on 9th December.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Gadwall

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	8	1	0	-	10	0	1	11	39	17	53	122
<b>LDV</b>	398	611	172								42	74

### **Wigeon** *Mareca penelope*

*Amber listed*

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

The LDV held nationally important numbers during both winter periods, where numbers peaked during January at 12,127 on the 11th (WeBS), with 8000 still present on 22nd March. Numbers varied greatly along the Lower Wharfe depending on the degree of flooding. Peak counts at Bolton Percy Ings included 90 on 18th January, 480 on 16th February and 120 on 8th March. 200 were at Wharfe Ings on 19th March. During this period single figures were also at Redhouse Reservoir, Heslington East, Hessay Pond and Stamford Bridge. The only records away from the LDV in April were a pair at Howsham Bridge on the 16th and a male at Heslington East on the 18th. 2140 were still in the LDV on 3rd April, including 1500 on Wheldrake Ings. After a clear out on the 23rd when only 462 remained, numbers decreased to just 57 at the month end.

During the breeding season small numbers remained in the LDV with the majority of reports coming from Wheldrake Ings, however there was no evidence of breeding. See RBBP report on page 126.

After a single at Bank Island on 12th July, the first returning birds were reported at the end of August with seven at Ozendyke Ings on 30th and two at Bank Island the next day. In September 103 were at Bank Island on the 5th, with a single at Newburgh Priory on the 3rd, while a female at Rufforth Tip was a site first for the observer. There was a big arrival into Bank Island on the 28th when 800 were present. Numbers in the LDV continued to increase during October with 2500 present by the 18th, rising to 3500 on 8th November when 1500 were at Bubwith Ings, with 4680 on the 14th. The peak count in the LDV during December was 7820 on the 28th, including 4250 at Wheldrake Ings. Counts towards the end of the year from CHL were significantly higher than seen in 2019, with 295 during October, 206 in November and 172 in December, perhaps influenced by a lack of flooding in the LDV. In the second winter period the peak counts along the Lower Wharfe included 200 at Bolton Percy Ings on 11th October, 560 at Wharfe Ings on 10th November and 330 at Bolton Percy Ings on 20th December. Away from the main sites, during October, ten were at Heslington East on the 15th, 22 at Foggathorpe on the 22nd and 178 at Angram ponds, Riccall on the 29th. 100 were at Acaster Malbis on 13th November and 26th December. On 9th November, 150 were at Naburn and 110 at Angram ponds, Riccall on 1st December.

### Monthly WeBS counts for Wigeon

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	46	65	26	0	0	0	0	0	77	295	206	172
<b>LDV</b>	12127	8230	10805								4680	7145

## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2020



Left to right and top to bottom

**Tundra Bean Goose** © Jono Leadley

**White-fronted Goose** © Duncan Bye

**Bewick's Swan** © Duncan Bye

**Garganey** © Tom Broxup

**Green-winged Teal** © Jono Leadley

**Cattle Egret** © Duncan Bye

**Great White Egret** © Matt Gowney

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana*

YNU

*Very rare winter visitor*

None in 2020, after annual records from 2015.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos**Amber listed**Common resident breeder and winter visitor**BBS 19/33*

At the beginning of the year counts peaked during January with 1986 in the LDV on the 11th, 80 at CHL and 129 at Heslington East and West. In February, up to 1900 were still in the LDV. Away from the core sites (see WeBS below), 35 were at Hull Road Park on 10th January, with 42 at West Ings on the 18th. On 16th April, a female was photographed eating great crested newts at Hassacarr NR – this image featured in the November edition of British Wildlife magazine (TW).

The first young noted was a brood of four at Heslington East on 10th April. Successful breeding was widely reported including four broods at Wheldrake Ings on 22nd April. Breeding was also confirmed at Askham Bryan, Bank Island, Beningbrough, Bishopthorpe, Bolton Percy Ings, Gilling, Haxby, Heslington Tillmire, Heslington West, Melbourne, Milford Common, Naburn, NDC, Norton-on-Derwent, Poppleton, Redhouse Reservoir, Riccall, Skipwith Common, Sutton upon Derwent, Ulleskelf and York (Rowntree Park).

Post breeding numbers increased during July with 140 at Heslington West on the 20th and 118 at Milford Common on the 24th. There were 130 at Milford Common on 2nd August with 109 there on 15th September. In October 103 were still at Milford Common on the 16th, with 194 in the LDV on the 17th, including 145 at Bank Island, and 57 were at Rowntree Park (York) on the 25th. Counts continued to increase in the LDV towards the end of the year. During November, 111 were at Newburgh Priory on the 6th, with 83 at Milford Common on the 24th. In December 70 were at Wigginton on the 4th and 50 at Redhouse Reservoir on the 13th.

## Monthly WeBS counts for Mallard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	80	64	41	-	27	32	191	155	44	25	6	24
<b>LDV</b>	1986	976	765								526	988
<b>HES</b>	129	73	46	-	67	93	153	214	137	90	143	98

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

Nationally important numbers were present in the LDV during the first winter period. During January, numbers in the LDV included an internationally important 629 present on the 19th, including 401 at Wheldrake Ings. During February, 427 on the 8th included 277 at NDC. The monthly maximum in March was 526 on the 8th (WeBS) with 437 still present on the 15th. Along the Lower Wharfe during the first winter period, peak counts at Bolton Percy Ings included 13 on 14th January,



80 on 14th February and 139 on 15th March. In February, two were at CHL on the 15th, while two at Bolton Percy Ings on 22nd March were the last reported away from the LDV. In April, numbers in the LDV continued to drop with 112 on the 3rd, 83 on the 9th and 15 at Wheldrake Ings on the 22nd. A pair on 30th April at Wheldrake Ings was the last until August.

A male at Bank Island on 31st August was the first returning bird, followed by two at Bank Island on 1st September with 14 there the next day, 18 on the 3rd and up to 30 in the LDV for the rest of the month. During October, 12 at Skipwith Common on the 6th and 10th was unusual. An influx of 149 at Bank Island on the 18th included 22 which left west. 66 were present in the LDV on 28th October with 170 by the month end. Counts in the LDV towards the end of the year included 196 at Bank Island on 1st November, while December saw 271 on the 13th with an internationally significant 633 present on the 28th. In the second winter period the peak counts at Bolton Percy Ings were 60 on 23rd November and 86 on 19th December.

Monthly WeBS counts for Pintail

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	577	427	526								147	254

**Teal** *Anas crecca*

*Amber listed*

*Abundant winter visitor and resident breeder in small numbers*

During the first winter period, internationally important numbers were present in the LDV, with over 5000 present through to March, peaking at 5940 on 8th March (WeBS). There was a big clear out on 1st April with 1300 remaining on the 3rd, decreasing to 831 by the 22nd and 189 at the month end. Counts along the Lower Wharfe included 60 at Bolton Percy Ings on 15th January, with up to 100 there in February and 360 were at Kirkby Wharfe on 21st March. At Newburgh Priory, 67 were present on 26th January with 70 there on 1st February. Away from the core sites, small numbers were reported from Allertorpe Common, Barmby Moor, Clifton Ings, Hessay Pond, Strensall Common and Wigginton. In April, 31 were at Heslington East on the 5th, with four still there on the 24th.

During May all records came from the LDV where an estimated 30 pairs were present early in the month, with reports mainly from Wheldrake Ings and Bank Island. On the 13th and 14th June 19 (14 male) were at Bank Island, while three were at Skipwith Common during the month. Breeding was confirmed at Bank Island on 29th June when a brood of seven was seen. There were no further breeding reports despite birds being present all summer including 27 at Wheldrake Ings on 5th July.

Passage birds started to return during August with five at Newburgh Priory on the 8th, a single at SHL on the 13th, four at Heslington East on the 14th, 70 at Wheldrake Ings on the 26th and 14 at Ozendyke Ings on the 30th, where 94 were present on 1st September. Numbers in the LDV increased from 200 on the 2nd to 1000 by the end of the month. On 13th September 64 were at Newburgh Priory and 40 at Heslington East on the 26th. Counts in the LDV during the second

winter period included 2000 on 18th October, with up to 3000 during November and 6550 on 28th December, the highest count of the year. Peak counts at Heslington East were 55 on 20th October, 65 on 11th November and 92 on 31st December. Counts along the Lower Wharfe included 300 at Bolton Percy Ings on 11th October, 260 at Wharfe Ings on 10th November and 200 at Bolton Percy Ings during December. At Newburgh Priory 85 were present on 11th October with 107 there on 15th November.

Monthly WeBS counts for Teal

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	46	76	16						49	111	144	279
<b>LDV</b>	5347	5673	5940								2355	3026

**Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis* YOC  
*Rare winter visitor and passage migrant*

This species has now been recorded annually in the area since 2015. A male was found in front of the Andy Booth (Tower) Hide at Wheldrake Ings on 26th January, remaining to 1st February (LJ et al). What was presumed to be the same male was re-found at Bubwith Ings on 16th March and again on 18th (DW, CSR et al). It then moved to Ellerton Ings on the 21st, before moving to NDC on the 24th where it remained to 1st April (NC et al).

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* YOC  
*Vagrant, though escapes from wildfowl collections are more likely*

None in 2020, after records in five of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina* Red listed  
*Winter visitor and breeder in small numbers*

It was a better first winter period in the LDV compared to 2019, however the lack of birds at CHL remains a concern, with the only reports from there being three on 14th February and singles present in November and December. At the beginning of the year, the main flock in the LDV was at the southern end of the valley. Peak counts included 118 at NDC on 27th January with 120 still present on 8th February and 123 on 15th March. Elsewhere in the area, Heslington East held 50 on 12th January, 40 on 16th February and ten on 29th March. Up to seven were at Heslington West during March. On 2nd January, a single was at Milford Common, while in March, six were at Derwenthorpe on the 26th.

Flocks having dispersed, during April small numbers were present at Rowntree Park, with six there on the 28th, while pairs were at Heslington East and West during the month, and 13 on the 25th included two pairs at Heslington West. During the breeding season a pair nested at Heslington West but was unsuccessful. Small numbers remained at both Heslington East and West throughout the summer. A pair did successfully fledge seven young at Derwenthorpe ponds. Breeding was also suspected in the LDV. See RBBP report on page 126.

The only records during September and October came from Heslington East where up to 11 were present, with ten still there on 1st November and up to three in December. In the LDV the first returning birds were four at Bank Island on 6th November, increasing to 25 by the end of December. Elsewhere in the area, in November, singles were at Newburgh Priory on the 7th, Naburn on the 9th and at Rawcliffe Lake and SHL on the 11th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Pochard

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>LDV</b>	71	120	81								0	5
<b>HES</b>	50	6	9	-	4	4	5			9	6	0

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

*Winter visitor and breeder in small numbers*

Counts at CHL continue to fall (similar to the situation with Pochard *Aythya ferina*), with a maximum at the beginning of the year of 42 on 22nd February. Numbers at Heslington East peaked at 114 on 12th January, with 53 in February and 27 on 29th March. In the LDV, 200 were present at the beginning of January, with 198 on 8th February, while spring passage in March saw 411 on the 8th and 307 still present at the month end. Flooding along the Lower Wharfe produced a maximum of five at Wharfe Ings on 19th March. On 16th March, ten were at Clifton Ings. During April, 44 were at Heslington East on the 3rd, while 50 pairs remained in the LDV at the month end.

During the breeding season a pair was at Milford Common in April and May, with the male still present in June, but there was no evidence of breeding. Up to three pairs were at Heslington East, but again there was no evidence of breeding. Breeding was confirmed with single pairs at Derwenthorpe (six young), Rufforth Tip, Skipwith Common (four young) and Wheldrake Ings (one pair).

Post breeding, 60 were at Heslington East on 22nd July with 62 there on 24th August and 47 on 15th September; numbers then reduced to around 30 with 32 on 25th December. The peak count at CHL was 65 in September. Only small numbers were present in the LDV during October and November, increasing to 88 by 29th December. Elsewhere in the area, 30 were at Dringhouses on 8th December and 20 there on the 27th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Tufted Duck

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	33	41	39	-	12	25	46	13	65	51	51	50
<b>LDV</b>	84	198	411								2	21
<b>HES</b>	114	53	17	-	5	3	29	42	29	30	31	7

*Note: All HES on Hes East apart from 3 in June*

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

YOC Red listed

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

In a poor year for this species, the two males present at the end of 2019 remained in the southern half of the LDV, frequenting Aughton Ings, Bubwith Ings

and NDC until 11th February, with three at NDC on 24th January. The only other report was of a single at CHL on 25th January.

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

*Red listed*

All records came during the period 30th March to 6th April. With increasing use of social media to share information and with a lack of traffic noise during lockdown, flocks were tracked across the country as they moved from the west to east coast allowing observers to hear flocks calling as they passed over the York area. These are thought to perhaps involve birds that had wintered off the North Wales coast, moving inland over the Mersey and Wirral area, before cutting across the Peak District to the Humber and Vale of York and then out to the North Sea.

The first two flocks were heard over Clifton on 30th March. A large movement took place across the north on the night of 31st March/1st April, with several flocks reported over Barmby-on-the-Marsh and nearby Hemingbrough after 22:00 on the 31st, followed later by a small flock calling over Wheldrake village and at Hessay at 23:00.

Movement continued across northern England on the night of 1st/2nd April with hundreds of birds possibly involved. Flocks were logged at the following locations as well as Acomb and Elvington:

Wheldrake – 19 flocks all between 21:50 and 00:18

Hemingbrough – several flocks after 22:00

Poppleton – between 22:00 and 22:20

Rowntree Park – at 22:08

Hull Road Park – at 22:25 and 22:29

Bishopthorpe – at 23:00

Hessay – continuous passage until 02:00

A further similar sized movement was recorded on the 2nd. Flocks were logged at the following locations as well as Acomb (three flocks), Clifton, North Duffield, Elvington, Thorganby and Fulford (four flocks):

Bishopthorpe – five flocks over between 21:50 and 22:16, all seemingly just north of village and heading east.

Haxby – three flocks at 21:50, 21:57 and 22:00

Wheldrake – 15 different flocks 21:51 and 02:44

Heworth – two flocks 21:55 to 22:05

Holgate – at 21:59

Rawcliffe – at 22:20

Bolton Percy – at 22:48

Copmanthorpe – Several flocks flying east between 22:00 and 22:15

There were fewer reports on the 3rd. Flocks were logged at the following locations as well as Copmanthorpe, Fulford (two flocks) and Woodthorpe

Heworth – at 21:10 and 22:10

Sherburn in Elmet – small group at 21:50, possibly just a single at 21:56

Osbaldwick – at 22:00, 22:02 and 22:17

Holgate – at 22:02

Bishopthorpe – flocks at 22:02 and 22:06  
 Riccall – at 22:02  
 Acaster Malbis – at 22:04  
 Acomb – flocks east at 22:04 and 22:23  
 Bolton Percy – at 22:07, 22:10 and a louder group at 22:16  
 Clifton – at 22:10  
 Seaton Ross – at 22:20  
 Gilling – at 22:40

On 4th April single flocks passed over Thorganby, Acomb and Malton. The last report was of a flock over Stamford Bridge on the 6th. There were no records of grounded birds.

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

*Amber listed*

At the beginning of the year the majority of records came from CHL and the LDV. Peak counts included 43 at CHL in February, while in the LDV, 25 were present on 26th January when 11 were at Wheldrake Ings. In February 20 on the 8th included ten at NDC, while 34 on 8th March included 16 at Wheldrake Ings. There were regular reports from Heslington East including seven on 12th January, with five on 13th February and five during March which remained to 6th April then two there to the 22nd. Elsewhere in the area, a single was at Acaster South Ings on 4th March, two at Rawcliffe on the 6th, and two at Wharfe Ings on the 7th and a single was on the river at Bolton Percy Ings on 26th April. At Wheldrake Ings, two redheads were still present on 1st May, with a single remaining to the 26th.

The first returning birds were reported in October with a single at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd followed by one at Heslington East from the 16th, four at CHL on the 22nd and one at Bolton Percy Ings on 31st. Numbers increased during November with a female at Rufforth Landfill Lagoons on the 9th, three in the LDV on the 14th, three on the river at Bolton Percy Ings on the 19th, six at Heslington East on the 24th and up to 11 at CHL. December saw up to five at Heslington East on the 5th, with six at CHL and 13 at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th.

Monthly WeBS counts for Goldeneye

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	28	43	19	-							11	15
<b>LDV</b>	19	20	33								3	6

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

*Amber listed*

None in 2020, after records in six of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

**Goosander** *Mergus merganser*

*Winter visitor, passage migrant and casual breeder*

*BBS 2/33*

At the beginning of the year peak counts at Heslington West included seven on 11th January and five on 8th February. Nine were at CHL on 9th January. The

highest counts came from Redhouse Reservoir, with 87 roosting on 19th January, and 15 on 23rd March and 25th April. In the LDV, seven were at Wheldrake Ings on 21st January, with four on 5th February and two were at Bank Island on 22nd April. Along the Lower Wharfe seven were at Wharfe Ings on 18th January, with six at Ozendyke Ings on 19th February, with a peak count of 14 at Wharfe Ings on 7th March. Elsewhere in the area, January saw 14 at Naburn Lock on the 12th and nine at Rawcliffe Lake on the 22nd, with 20 there on 11th February. 16 were at Clifton Ings on 14th March.

Along the River Wharfe between Ulleskelf and Tadcaster, ten were still present on 29th April, with six there on 9th May. Also in May, a pair was at Bolton Percy Ings on the 15th, with a redhead there on the 28th, while a single remained at Naburn Lock until the 6th. In June, five at Heslington East on the 7th was unusual, while breeding was confirmed at Bolton Percy Ings on 18th June when a female was seen with four young. During July, nine were at Bolton Percy Ings on the 4th and seven were at Redhouse Reservoir on the 26th.

The next record came in September when a redhead was at Bolton Percy Ings on the 20th. At Heslington West the first bird back arrived on 3rd October, where monthly peak counts were 38 on 25th October, 20 on 12th November and seven on 12th December. Also in October, one was at Clifton Ings on the 10th, 12 at Poppleton on the 14th, four at Bolton Percy Ings the next day and a single at Bank Island on the 28th. The biggest counts again came from the Redhouse Reservoir roost where 76 were present on 22nd November, with 70 on 25th December. Only small numbers were present along the River Wharfe with a peak of five at Ozendyke Ings on 17th December. In November, five were at Gilling on the 3rd, ten at Rawcliffe Lake on the 25th and seven at Derwenthorpe on the 27th. At Rufforth Landfill Lagoons, three left north on 19th November, with singles there the next day and on 1st December. During December, six were at Derwenthorpe on the 26th the same day as 16 were at Rawcliffe Lake with 17 at Acaster Malbis on the 27th, when 17 were at Dringhouses and 11 at CHL.

Monthly WeBS counts for Goosander

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>HES</b>	5	6								33	13	6

*Note: All on Hes West*

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

*Resident breeder and released to shoot*

*BBS 9/33*

Widely distributed throughout the region (58 sites), most reports were of ones or twos. The only counts of more than ten in the first half of the year all occurred in January when there were 15 at Thornton on the 4th, 15 at Sand Hutton on the 15th and 22 at Milford Common on the 22nd. In the second half of the year there were 15-20 on a stubble field bordering Heslington Tillmire on 22nd August and 27 on Fulford Golf Course on 9th October. Milford Common held 30 on 15th September and 13 on 16th October. At Riccall there were 14 on 2nd September

(thought to be of wild stock as no recent releases in the area) and 22 on 9th November. The year's highest count was 40 at Escrick on 21st October on a harvested field that had contained a crop of commercial birdseed.

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder and released to shoot*

*BBS 5/33*

Reported from around 70 sites (the same as 2019), predominantly in the south and west of the region. Most records were of low single figures with nearly half of the counts being of two birds, however nearly one fifth of counts related to coveys of greater than five birds, again similar to 2019.

Calling birds or territory holding was reported from Acomb, Bank Island, Bielby, Biggin, Heslington East, Knavesmire, Naburn, Nether Poppleton, Redhouse Reservoir, Scagglethorpe Lane, Selby and Sutton upon Derwent. Breeding was confirmed at NDC where an occupied nest was present on 17th June. Recently fledged young were seen at Scagglethorpe Lane and at Burlands Lane, both near Poppleton.

The highest count of the year was 41 at Milford Common on 18th September, but these were clearly releases. Almost as high was a count of 34 at Riccall Ings on 29th October (coveys of 12, 14 and eight), while 12 were at Copmanthorpe on both 12th November and 9th December. Elsewhere larger coveys of more than five birds were seen at Bank Island, Barton-Le-Willows, Brumber Hill, Cawton, Copmanthorpe, East Cottingwith, Rufforth Tip, Haxby, Melbourne, Naburn, Rufforth, Ryther, SHL, Selby, South Duffield, Strensall, Thornton Ellers, Wheldrake and Whenby.

**Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce migrant breeder*

A good year in the LDV with a total of 23 singing males located by the end of June. The first was one at East Cottingwith on 19th May followed by one singing at NDC at dusk the next day, then two at Thorganby on 31st May. An influx occurred in early June with ten located around the LDV on the 3rd (four at East Cottingwith, four at Melbourne and two at Brighton Meadows). One was singing at Wheldrake Ings from the 7th to 12th June, two were at Thorganby Ings on the 10th and another new bird was at East Cottingwith on the 11th. A recently fledged juvenile was seen at Wheldrake Ings on 12th June. Further birds were found in July, at Elvington on the 1st, Seavy Carr at Thornton on the 3rd and at Thornton Ellers on the 31st. August records were of one singing at Elvington on the 1st and another at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th and 6th and finally two at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th. The only report away from the LDV was of one at Holtby on 22nd June. See RBBP report on page 126.

**Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*

*Resident breeder and released to shoot*

*BBS 23/33*

Common across the region, with large numbers released to shoot. A reply to a Freedom of Information request indicated that in 2020 about 311,370 birds were

released in the Club area.

In the first half of the year higher counts of more than 20 birds were 23 at Milford Common on 22nd January, 24 at Thornton on 15th April, 40 at Milford Common on 23rd April and 34 at Melbourne on 27th May.

Recently fledged young were noted at Bank Island, Bolton Percy Ings, Milford Common, Ulleskelf Mires and Wheldrake Ings.

Numbers at Milford Common rose in autumn with 74 there on 15th September and 79 on 16th October. Elsewhere there were 24 at Bank Island on 10th October, 26 near Haxby on 17th October, 50 at Riccall on 17th November, 55 at Escrick on 24th November and 29 at Wistow Clough on 26th November.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

*Resident breeder*

BBS 1/33

Present at 41 sites during the year. Peak counts in the first winter period included three at Bank Island, six at Bolton Percy Ings, six at Gilling East, three at Heslington East, four at NDC and four at Wheldrake Ings. Twos were at CHL, Kirkby Wharfe and Skipwith Common with singles at Church Bridge, Melbourne, Milford Common and Ozendyke Ings. By March there were four at Bank Island, seven at NDC and three at Ulleskelf Mires.

During the breeding season twos were present at Clifton Moorgate, Foggathorpe and Hemingbrough while CHL, Riccall and Strensall Common each held one pair. Confirmed breeding occurred at Heslington East (pair with four young), Milford Common (two pairs, one pair producing two young), Rufforth Tip lagoons (three or four pairs, one juvenile seen), Skipwith Common (two pairs, both rearing one young) and Wheldrake Ings (pair with one juvenile).

Four birds were on the River Derwent at Ellerton in late October. In the final two months of the year there were three at Bolton Percy Ings, five at Gilling East, three at Storwood, twos at Bank Island, CHL, Ellerton Ings, Heslington East, Thornton Lock and Wheldrake Ings and singles at Milford Common, NDC, Riccall and Thorganby Ings.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*

*Resident breeder and passage visitor*

Recorded at 16 sites during the year, the only birds noted during the first winter period were a pair at Crockey Hill, one or two at Heslington East and a single on Rawcliffe Lake.

Pairs were present during spring at Heslington East, Heslington West, NDC and Wheldrake Ings. Courtship display was observed at both Heslington East and Heslington West but no young were seen at either site. Successful breeding occurred at Chapman's Pond, Dringhouses where a pair with one young were present in April, and at CHL where six birds including a large juvenile were present in August. Singles during spring and summer were present at Foggathorpe, Hemingbrough and Rawcliffe Lake. At Heslington East there were up to three in June and July then two in October and a single in November. Other singles were present at CHL, Heslington Tillmire and Wistow Clough during October and at



Naburn and Ryther Ings in November. In December five were at Dringhouses on Chapman's and Hogg's ponds (with seven there on the 5th) while singles were present at Bank Island (relocating to Wheldrake Ings) and Rawcliffe Lake.

**Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* YOC Red listed  
*Rare winter visitor*

None in 2020, after records in three of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

**Black-necked Grebe** *Podiceps nigricollis* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce passage visitor; formerly rare breeder*

None in 2020, after records in five of the past ten years, most recently 2018.

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* YOC Amber listed  
*Very rare spring and summer migrant*

None in 2020, after records in three of the past ten years, most recently 2018.

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce winter visitor*

One was at NDC on 31st July; it flew across the Top Pond at dawn before dropping out of view (CSR), the sixth consecutive year of sightings.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* YNU  
*Very rare vagrant*

Two individuals visited the area; the first was a summer-plumaged adult found feeding amongst cattle on the riverbank at Ellerton on 11th August. It subsequently flew over the river towards Thorganby Ings (CSR). The second, a juvenile, was found on the evening of 9th September on Low Grounds at Wheldrake Ings (CSR, DMB et al). It was present again at Low Grounds the next day (DMB, CG) and at Ellerton on the 15th (ASw) and the 16th (BirdGuides). These are only the fourth and fifth to be recorded in the York area.

*Records subject to acceptance by the YNU.*

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* BBS 7/33  
*Resident breeder*

Reported from 90 locations, most records were of one or two birds. The largest numbers were found in the LDV where there were 27 on 11th January increasing to 34 on 8th February as birds returned to their breeding site. Elsewhere counts of greater than ten early in the year came from CHL where there were 13 on 8th February and from Bolton Percy Ings with 13 there on 16th February. Eight were present at the Acomb Ings heronry on 20th February. There were six active nests at the heronry at CHL on 15th February and nine to 12 nests at the Bishop Wood heronry on 15th March. The heronry at Thicket Priory had a productive breeding season with 34 active nests on 7th May. The first six fledged young appeared at nearby Wheldrake Ings on the early date of 6th May. A heronry near Yearsley had

one nest with young on 14th May.

Post breeding numbers remained high at Wheldrake Ings during July with typically 20-25 birds present and 30 there on the 13th, numbers then fell with 22 birds scattered throughout the LDV at the end of August. A count of 11 at Naburn Ings on 15th November was the highest count (and the only count of more than ten) away from the LDV in the second half of the year.

### **Great White Egret** *Ardea alba*

YOC

#### *Scarce visitor*

Another year of regular sightings; the majority of records were from the LDV where one or two birds were present in every month except June.

In the wider LDV singles were seen at Barmby Moor on 25th January, Wheldrake Ings on 1st February then at Bank Island, Wheldrake Ings, Storwood and East Cottingwith from 4th March to 7th (GR, LDV Blog). One was at Thornton on 13th May then north over Bank Island the next day (LDV Blog). There were no further records until one at Wheldrake Ings on 25th July, with it or another at NDC until 6th August (CSR, LDV Blog). An influx in September brought three to Bank Island on the 16th (one of these was colour-ringed and had been ringed in the nest in Belarus in May 2020) (LDV Blog). Regular sightings of one or two continued at LDV sites through the autumn (DMB, GWa, TWa et al). In December three flew north over Bank Island on the 1st (CSR) and the last was one at Bank Island on the 24th (LDV Blog).

Away from the LDV singles were seen (in date order) at Appleton Roebuck (BirdGuides) and nearby Bolton Percy both on 7th January (ASw, JRe) and again at Bolton Percy on 13th February (ASc), Strensall Common on 27th May (JW), Bolton Percy on 6th August (JRe), Foston Grange Farm (near Whitwell Grange) on 3rd October (DWa), Bolton Percy Ings on 9th and 10th November (ASw, JRe, PD), Cawood on 10th November (BirdGuides), Moor Monkton also on 10th November (MC), Wistow Clough on 13th November (PD) and Stable Ings near Coxwold on 6th December (RH). See RBBP report on page 126.

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

*Resident, with increasing numbers breeding in the LDV*

*BBS 1/33*

Sightings continue to increase year on year with records from at least 68 locations (compared to 40 in 2019). The majority of counts were of one or two birds. Nearly two thirds of records came from sites within the LDV. Early in the year counts of more than two away from the LDV were three at Angram ponds, Riccall on 25th January, four at Heslington East on 8th February, four at Kirkby Wharfe on 22nd March and four at Naburn on 2nd April.

Numbers in the LDV built up from late January beginning with eight at Wheldrake Ings on 31st January, 11 in fields near Hagg Bridge on 20th February, 12 at Wheldrake Ings on 19th March, nine on Melbourne Ings on 3rd April, 12 at NDC on 8th April and up to six elsewhere in the LDV during March and April.

A visit to the herony at Thicket Priory on 7th May found 19 active nests with some very small young seen. Several young fledged between the 18th and 21st

June and 34 juveniles were seen coming out of the heronry at dawn on the 23rd.

Double figure counts continued at Wheldrake Ings during July and early August, numbers dwindled thereafter with just one or two present by September. Four were at Skipwith Common on 13th August, eight were between Bubwith and East Cottingwith on 3rd September and six flew north over Bank Island at dawn on the 10th. Ones or twos remained at several LDV sites in October and November with up to four in December.

Notable post breeding counts elsewhere included nine at Bolton Percy Ings on 18th November, six at Ulleskelf Mires on 27th December and threes at Bishopthorpe, Hassacarr NR, Heslington East and Sheriff Hutton between October and the end of the year. See RBBP report on page 126.

**Gannet** *Morus bassanus*  
*Rare visitor*

YOC Amber listed

An immature flew east over Bank Island on 17th September (CSR), the fifth record in the past ten years and the first since 2017.

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

*Passage and winter visitor; localised resident breeder*

BBS 2/33

Early in the year peak counts at Wheldrake Ings were 24 on 4th January, 31 on 29th January and 37 roosting on 8th February. Elsewhere NDC attracted 12 on 5th February and a roost tree near Wharfe Ings held 17 on 26th March. Unusually only two birds were present at CHL at the start of the year with just three there in March. There were no reports of breeding.

In the second half of the year the highest counts at CHL were 21 on 22nd October, 24 on 15th November, and ten on 14th December. Wheldrake Ings attracted 12 on 21st November, 14 on 6th December and 32 (into the roost) on the 28th. Other notable counts were 12 at Bolton Percy Ings on 17th September and nine at Clifton Ings on 2nd December, five at Dringhouses on the 5th and five at Acaster Malbis on the 15th.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*  
*Scarce passage migrant*

YOC Amber listed

There was a welcome increase in spring records in 2020. The first was over Ellerton and Thorganby on 12th April (LDV Blog). Singles were at Pool Bridge Farm on 21st April (MF) and Clifton Ings on the 27th (DW). May opened with one at Pool Bridge Farm on the 1st, which conveniently rested high in a dead tree where it could be viewed from Heslington Tillmire (DMB). One was at Melbourne on the 20th (CSR) and the 26th (DS), with what may have been the same bird at Wheldrake Ings on the 27th (DMB) and then at Skipwith Common on the 28th (CSR).

In the autumn, one flew south at Copmanthorpe on 23rd August (TW), singles were at Wheldrake Ings on 8th September (GC) and Thorganby on 18th September (PC) and finally one was at Ozendyke Ings on 5th October (PD).

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

*Common resident breeder and passage migrant*

BBS 7/33

The number of reports (660) was more than double the 2019 total of 324, though COVID lockdown and the Club raptor survey (page 141) will have influenced the reporting rate. The 10km squares with the highest number of reports were SE54 with 20% of the total and SE65 with 16%, and the sites with the most records were the Poppleton area (60 records), Wheldrake Ings (59), Naburn (48) and Bolton Percy Ings (43). There were six or fewer reports from SE57, 66, 67, 75, 76 and 77, and as in 2019 there were no reports from SE56.

Evidence of breeding came from Bishop Wood, Hassacarr NR, Heslington East, Heworth, Milford Common, Naburn, Rowntree Park, Skipwith Common, Stamford Bridge, Thornton and Wheldrake Ings. Breeding probably occurred at Acaster Malbis, Bank Island, Bolton Percy, Bolton Percy Ings, Clifton Park, Fulford, Heslington, Hull Road Park, Kirkby Wharfe, Melbourne, Poppleton and Sherburn in Elmet,

March, April and May were the busiest months with 38% of the records and June and July were the quietest with 11%.

There were numerous reports from gardens and of attacks at garden feeders. Prey reported were Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Nuthatch *Sitta europaeus* and Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*. A male caught a vole at Welburn in November.

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis*

YOC

*Rare passage visitor and very rare resident breeder*

Six reports were exactly half the number received in 2019, which was itself seen as a below average year, and no reports suggesting breeding behaviour were received. Records came from SE63 (January), SE64 (November), SE67 (July), SE73 (two records – November and December) and SE74 (October).

**Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce visitor and passage migrant; now present in the LDV throughout the year*

There was a further rise in records from 134 in 2019 to 352 in 2020. As in previous years, the majority of records came from the LDV, with just 8% of records away from there. Twenty-three records from Skipwith Common are likely to involve birds mainly or solely from the LDV.

At least seven, possibly eight, birds were seen in the LDV in January, with five, possibly six, in February. There were six different birds in March, including an adult male which appeared at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th. Birds remained in the LDV throughout April and May, and a pair at Wheldrake Ings in June were thought to be nesting. Breeding was confirmed with a newly fledged juvenile at North Duffield Ings on 3rd August, and at least two juveniles and an adult male and female were present in September. A minimum of ten was seen in October, including three wing-tagged birds from Norfolk. There were at least eight in the LDV on 19th

## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2020



Left to right and top to bottom

**Osprey** © Duncan Bye

**Hen Harrier** © Tim Ward

**Little Ringed Plover** © Duncan Bye

**Knot** © Duncan Bye

**Lesser Yellowlegs** (two pictures) ©  
Duncan Bye

**Spotted Redshank** © Maria Scullion

November with a minimum of six in December.

As in recent years there was a series of sightings along the Lower Wharfe Valley – an immature male was at Bolton Percy Ings on 25th May. In the autumn a juvenile female was in the Bolton Percy Ings area from the 8th to 30th August. A different bird flew south at Bolton Percy Ings on 12th September and a juvenile was in the Bolton Percy Ings area from the 1st to 14th October.

Away from the LDV and the Lower Wharfe Valley, birds were seen at Riccall on 27th January and Sand Hutton on the 30th, south over Bishopthorpe on 4th April and at Rufforth on the 8th, over Selby on 9th May, Milford Common on 22nd and 25th June and 31st August, Wistow Clough on 10th September and Clifton Ings on 9th October.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus*  
*Scarce autumn and winter visitor*

YOC *Red listed*

A better year than the previous three. In the first half of the year an immature female was seen intermittently at Skipwith Common between 5th and 24th March (HP, DT et al). A ringtail was at Strensall Common on 2nd April (TWa). The second winter period saw one at Thorganby on the 22nd and 23rd October (LDV Blog). One was near Malton on 16th November (RN), a ringtail was at Skipwith Common on 27th November (LDV Blog) and the same day also saw one at Strensall Common (BB). A male was then seen at Strensall Common from the 6th to 24th December (PM, JLe et al).

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

*Resident in the southern part of the recording area; scarce elsewhere* BBS 5/33

The 795 records in 2020 were a significant increase on the 468 records received in 2019. Most reports came from the well-watched Lower Wharfe Valley and LDV where birds are present throughout the year. There were no records from SE56, three from SE57, one from SE66, three from SE67, five from SE75 and three from SE77. The first six months of the year produced 63% of the records, with April and May the busiest months, each having 109 records. Most records involved one or two, occasionally three birds, but with four at Bolton Percy Ings on 8th March, four at Bolton Percy on 15th March, five at Skipwith Common on 5th April, five at Bubwith Ings on 6th May, five at Bolton Percy on 20th May and four at Kirkby Wharfe on the 8th and 29th August. One observer noted that the number of birds per visit to the Lower Wharfe Valley averaged 1.28 in 2020, compared with 0.83 in 2019, 0.91 in 2018 and 0.78 in 2017.

Display, copulation and nest building were seen in the LDV in March and at least four pairs were present in May and June, though breeding was not confirmed. Juveniles were seen during July in the Lower Wharfe and may have fledged locally, but again breeding was not confirmed. As in 2019, there were claims, not directly reported to the YOC, that two pairs bred in the Howardian Hills. Farming operations, particularly hay and silage cutting, again attracted the attention of hunting birds, as did abattoir waste spread on fields near Riccall.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*

YNU

*Very rare vagrant*

A remarkable record of two juveniles which were photographed over the pool at Wheldrake lngs on 2nd August and then drifted off to the west. However, they were only identified later from photographs (DMB, JLe). The second record for our area, the first was at Bubwith on 19th May 1979. See article on page 137.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*

YNU

*Very rare vagrant (but birds from reintroduction scheme also possible)*

The first for the recording area since the club formed, was seen over Bishop Wilton mid-morning on 26th March (per JLe) before being seen over Melbourne shortly afterwards (NC) – see article on page 131 – it was then photographed over Doncaster later that day.

The other three records involved birds from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme (Category E) which, sadly, passed unseen through our area. These were tracked by the Roy Dennis Foundation as being in the area as follows:

19th July – a young male G393 roosted at Ellerton.

31st August – a young female G318 was tracked Wass > Coxwold > Linton-on-Ouse.

3rd September – a young female G324 was south-west of York at 1pm, flying at just 60 metres and then passed over the River Ouse at Goole shortly after 2pm. She was tracked by the project flying Rufforth > Copmanthorpe > Bubwith > Howden.

With the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme well underway and another planned in Norfolk, further records seem likely.

**Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

*Passage migrant and common resident breeder*

BBS 29/33

The record-breaking total of 1082 records from 151 different sites in 2019 was easily broken in 2020 with 1920 records from 214 sites, so this continues to be the commonest raptor in the Club area. March, April and May were the busiest months with 39% of the records and peaking at 278 records in May. February and July were the quietest months with 66 and 106 records respectively. There were no records from SE56 and the totals for the other hectads were: SE53 = 243, SE54 = 293, SE55 = 117, SE57 = 13, SE63 = 195, SE64 = 241, SE65 = 225, SE66 = 90, SE67 = 14, SE73 = 51, SE74 = 354, SE75 = 27, SE76 = 29, SE77 = 28. These figures reflect the relatively good coverage of the LDV (SE64 and 74) and the Lower Wharfe Valley (SE53 and 54), and it seems unlikely that the low numbers from the north of the Club area are an accurate reflection of the true status there. See the article on the 2020 Raptor Survey on page 141. There were numerous counts of birds in high single figures and a minimum of 51 throughout the LDV on 11th October was followed by a count of 25 worming in just one field at Crockey Hill on the 12th and 13th October. Birds continued to be seen over the centre of York and a kettle of ten birds above Monks Cross on 29th September drifted off towards the city centre. Ten were over Copmanthorpe on 1st October.

Proof of breeding came from Bolton Percy Ings, Brumber Hill, Castle Howard, Grimston Moor, Hovingham, Melbourne, Milford Common, Nether Poppleton, Ozendyke Ings, Pocklington Canal (The Grange), Riccall, Scackleton, Seavy Carr, Skipwith Common and Wistow Clough. Two young were ringed at Thornton Ellers after one fell from the nest and was later returned. Probable breeding was recorded at Biggin, Colton, Laytham Lane, Low Hutton, Naburn, Poppleton, Seaton Ross, Strensall, The Retreat and Thornton.

One was seen raiding the nest of a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* at Dunnington on 14th April.

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

*Winter and passage visitor; resident breeder*

Wintering birds in the LDV saw up to six at Wheldrake, six along the Pocklington Canal and two each at Bank Island and NDC in January. Three were calling at Wheldrake Ings on 8th February and a pair was calling at Thornton Lock on 2nd March. Elsewhere one was calling from East Marsh at Milford Common on 5th January and one was there on 17th March. One was picked up on a Nocmig recording flying over Hessay on 7th April.

By May, there were six pairs at Wheldrake Ings, two pairs at Bank Island and at Thornton Ellers and a pair each at Aughton Ings and NDC. One was singing on Bishopthorpe Ings on 5th June and two adults were at Skipwith Common on the 13th, where a trail camera was set up to determine how many pairs were present and to record breeding success. In June there were up to five pairs at Wheldrake Ings, and other pairs scattered around the LDV. The first juvenile was seen at Wheldrake Ings on 16th July and another, from a different brood on the 29th. At Skipwith at least two pairs bred, with an adult and two juveniles seen on 25th July and another juvenile on 1st August. During August, four were singing at Wheldrake Ings and two calling at Bank Island, while the highest count from Skipwith Common was three on the 14th. Two were at Bank Island from 19th September and up to five calling at Wheldrake Ings during the month. Up to four were calling in the LDV during October, while the last sighting from Skipwith Common came on the 30th. Four wintering birds were at both NDC and Wheldrake Ings during November as well as at least two along Pocklington Canal, increasing to 15 wintering territories in the LDV by the end of December.

Away from the LDV in the second half of the year one was heard during a Nocmig over Hessay on 14th September, one at Yorkshire Arboretum on 19th November and one at Heslington East on the 29th. Singletons were reported in a lagoon at Rufforth Tip on 3rd December, at Bolton Percy Ings on the 20th and at Heslington East again on the 31st. See RBBP report on page 126.

**Corncrake** *Crex crex*

YOC *Red listed*

*Scarce summer migrant and casual breeder*

After a poor year in 2019, there were no records in 2020. Coverage in the LDV was severely limited by COVID-lockdown restrictions during the time birds would most likely be heard. See also RBBP report on page 126.



**Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana*  
*Scarce passage migrant and casual breeder*

YOC Amber listed

After a very good year in 2019, there were no definite records received in 2020. Coverage in the LDV was severely limited by COVID-lockdown restrictions during the time birds would most likely be heard. See RBBP report on page 126.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

*Common resident breeder and winter visitor*

BBS 6/33

As in previous years, widely reported from areas of suitable habitat during the year, mainly in low single-digit numbers, with higher counts coming from the LDV, Heslington East and West (see WeBS table). As in 2019, WeBS counts from CHL were low with eight on 15th October the maximum. In the LDV the January WeBS count of 121 was the peak count for the year, while numbers at Heslington East and West were similar to 2019, peaking at 61 in January. Elsewhere double-digit counts came from Newburgh Priory in February and March, with 18 on 1st February the peak count.

Occupied nests were noted from late March and successful breeding was reported from many areas; the first brood of two was seen at Clifton Ings on 15th April. Adults with young were also seen at: Allerthorpe Common, Bolton Percy Ings, Clifton Backies, Heslington East and West (at least five broods), Hessay (a brood of seven in a garden pond), Norton, Pocklington Canal (Hagg Bridge, Melbourne and Storwood), Rawcliffe Meadows, Riccall, Rufforth Tip Lagoons, Scagglethorpe Lane (Popleton), Storwood, Ulleskelf Mires, Wheldrake Ings (at least four broods), Wistow Clough and Yearsley. Two pairs bred at Skipwith Common, however, the number of pairs there was noted as having decreased noticeably in recent years with increased predation reducing breeding success.

Post breeding the highest count received from Wheldrake Ings was of 22 adults with three juveniles on 2nd August. In the second winter period, numbers in the LDV were much lower than in 2019, building during November and into December to 98 on the 13th (cf. 143 in 2019). Away from WeBS sites the only counts of ten or more were ten on Rawcliffe Lake on 29th November and 11 at Hull Road Park, York on 10th December.

Monthly WeBS counts for Moorhen

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	6	5	6	-	5			6	4	8	6	3
<b>LDV</b>	129	76	43								76	98
<b>HES</b>	61	40	35	-	23	27	26	39	46	49	39	45

Note: consistently much higher numbers on Hes East than Hes West

**Coot** *Fulica atra*

*Common resident breeder and winter visitor*

BBS 0/33

As in previous years, counts away from the University and the LDV, where given, were mostly in low single digits. The only three-figure counts came from the LDV (notably Wheldrake Ings in the first winter and spring period) and double-

figure counts came from Heslington East and West through the year (see WeBS). Numbers at CHL were even lower than in 2019, the peak count there being 14 in both July and August. In the LDV numbers built through January to 439 by the month end – with 250 at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th the maximum count from there. 83 were at NDC on 1st February. The monthly maximum for February was 433 on the 8th (WeBS). After extensive flooding at the end of February numbers dropped markedly before increasing again to 347 on 25th March. Numbers reduced again as birds dispersed to breed. Elsewhere, 22 were at Ulleskelf Mires on 19th March.

Nest building was noted from early April, and the first young were seen at Clifton Moor on the 21st. Successful breeding also took place at Bank Island, Cawood, Heslington East (several broods), Milford Common, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne and Storwood), Rufforth Tip Lagoons, Wheldrake Ings, Wistow Clough and York (Knavesmire, Rowntree Park). Thirteen birds were at Hemingbrough Quarry on 16th June.

Post breeding, away from Heslington East where WeBS counts were the monthly maxima apart from 38 on 6th November, the only double figure count was of 30 at Dringhouses on 8th December (on Chapman's and Hoggs Ponds), while the only record from the LDV was of one at NDC on 29th December.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Coot

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>CHL</b>	8	3	8	-	2	6	14	14	11		1	2
<b>LDV</b>	141	433	103									
<b>HES</b>	36	38	16	-	13	14	33	34	37	29	17	40

Note: Max count 10 at Hes West in Feb, otherwise mostly 2 to 4 per month there

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

YOC Amber listed

#### *Scarce passage migrant*

The first of the year was one heard calling from the Low Grounds area (CSR, NCa) on 13th March. In April, three were at Wheldrake Ings at dawn on the 19th before departing northeast, possibly having roosted there overnight (LDV Blog). A pair was seen at Menthorpe on the 24th (LDV Blog) and two over New Earswick on the 25th (DC), the same day as one which circled over Bank Island early in the afternoon before dropping down into the Seaton Ross area (DMB). Three were seen again on the 28th, over Skipwith Common (LDV Blog). In July two were reported flying southeast over Selby on the 7th (NYBN) and one southwest over Skipwith Common the same day (LDV Blog). Later in the month one flew over Melbourne on the 26th, later located near Foggathorpe. In mid-July two flew south over East Cottingwith on the 19th. On 7th August one was heard calling at Bank Island (all LDV Blog). On 28th September one was heard calling over Bank Island and then at Thornton Ellers (CSR, NCa). The last of the year was one which flew northwest over Bank Island calling on 6th November (LDV Blog). See RPPB report on page 126.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*  
*Common passage migrant and scarce breeder*

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 3/33*

The first arrived a week later than in 2019, at the beginning of February. Two were present at NDC on the 1st, with singles at Heslington East the next day and Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd. Small numbers were moving around the LDV in the first half of the month, building to seven by the 17th, with a peak count of 18 on the 23rd. Away from the LDV, six at Heslington East on the 8th was notable. By the month end, small numbers were reported widely from the usual sites across the area. Passage continued through March with birds arriving back on their breeding territories making the picture complex – there were 14 pairs located in the LDV on the 22nd. Away from the LDV birds were reported from 23 sites during the month, up from 17 last year.

Breeding attempts were recorded from the LDV and at the following sites: Acaster Airfield, Dunnington Common, Heslington East, Hessay Pond, SHL, Strensall Common and Towthorpe, with records of birds present in the breeding season at a further 20 sites across the area.

Birds were still widespread in July, with reports around the LDV and from a further 12 sites. Notable counts were eight at Copmanthorpe on the 2nd and eight at Ozendyke Ings on the 4th. Numbers rapidly tailed off in early August, with four still in the LDV on the 1st, with two on the 8th and three flying west on the 12th. Away from the LDV, birds were recorded from Bolton Percy Ings, Clifton Ings, Heslington East and Nether Poppleton. As usual, none were recorded during the autumn until an interesting flurry of records in December: one was at Heslington East on 9th December, with further singles at Bolton Percy Ings on the 11th and Clifton Ings on the 28th. Possibly the same single was seen at Wheldrake Ings, also on the 28th.

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

*Amber listed*

Despite the increasing breeding population in Yorkshire, Avocets remain rare in the York area. There were three spring records, all in March. Three flew south at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th, with two over Hessay Industrial Estate on the 24th and a single at Heslington East on the 28th.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus*  
*Winter visitor, passage migrant and resident breeder*

*Red Listed*  
*BBS 17/33*

Much smaller numbers were present in the area in January compared with 2019; a maximum of 3728 was counted in the LDV on the 11th, with the highest single-site count being 1200 at Thornton Ings on the 3rd. Very few counts were reported away from the LDV, with 200 at Kirkby Wharfe on the 18th the only one of note. Numbers increased in February as early passage birds swelled the wintering flocks. Numbers peaked at 6121 in the LDV on the 13th before re-flooding forced birds to disperse. Again, there were very few notable counts away from the LDV, showing this site's importance for this species in our area. With milder weather in March, the first displaying birds were noted from Thorganby on

the 2nd. Good numbers were still present in the LDV, with 677 the peak count on the 8th. Towards the end of the month, many pairs were back on territory across the area with displaying birds noted throughout the LDV and at ten further sites.

The LDV remained the stronghold for the area's breeding population, and pairs were also present at a minimum of 35 other sites in the breeding season. Lapwings are often attracted to breed in farm fields but this frequently ends in failure due to the impact of agricultural activity on pairs with eggs or young chicks and this was reported from many of the sites across the area.

June heralds the first post-breeding gatherings, many of which are made up of failed breeders. The peak counts were in mid-month, with 160 at Wheldrake Ings on the 16th and 128 at Bank Island on the 21st presumably made up of many of the same birds wandering between these two adjacent sites. Only small numbers were noted away from the LDV. Numbers increased slightly in July to a peak of 178 at Wheldrake Ings on the 29th, with flocks also appearing elsewhere: 86 at Ozendyke Ings on the 11th, 52 at Bolton Percy Ings on 29th and 38 at Brumber Hill on the 20th being the peak counts from those sites. August yielded higher numbers as breeding pairs and juveniles swelled flocks. The highest counts came from outside of the LDV with 400 at Brumber Hill on the 21st, 500 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 26th and an impressive 650 at Ozendyke Ings on the 29th. The highest count from the LDV was 400 at Elvington, also on the 29th. Numbers declined in September with maxima of 180 at Ozendyke Ings on the 1st, 350 at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th, 350 at Bolton Percy Ings and 100 at Naburn both on the 10th. Up to 500 were present throughout the LDV during October although the highest site count was only 200, at Bank Island on the 7th. Bolton Percy Ings exceeded this, with 560 on the 4th. Elsewhere, 128 were recorded at Riccall Ings on the 11th and 170 at Barby on the 15th. The peak counts for November were similar to 2019, with 2200 in the LDV mid-month and no significant counts elsewhere, but numbers in December were comparatively lower, peaking at 3260 mid-month and decreasing thereafter due to extensive flooding.

#### Monthly WeBS counts for Lapwing

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	3728	5132	677								2097	3260

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

Numbers were marginally up on 2019 in January, with 1200 at NDC on the 19th, an increase from the 1062 recorded in the LDV during the WeBS count on the 11th. Elsewhere, 200 were at Kirkby Wharfe on the 18th and 206 at Poppleton on the 23rd. Numbers rose considerably to 4030 in the LDV by 8th February, with most of these at the south end of the reserve, around North Duffield Ings and Bubwith Ings, providing a spectacular sight. Few flocks were noted elsewhere, with 277 at Poppleton the highest count during February. The high February counts dwindled rapidly in March, although the Poppleton flock held up until mid-month, with 120 still there on the 19th. In the LDV, the large flocks had gone by

early March, with a small passage noted in the third week of the month, with 26 at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th and 52 the next day. 150 on arable in the Menthorpe area on the 1st and 2nd April was, therefore, quite surprising, with 12 at Melbourne Ings and 25 over Elvington on the 3rd. Twenty were at Scagglethorpe on the 9th with 55 flying southeast over Thorganby the same day. Twelve over Poppleton on the 13th were the last of the spring.

Four flying north over Ozendyke Ings on 10th July were the first returning birds, with no more seen until 5th August, when 12 were present in the LDV. The highest August count was of 32 in the LDV on the 7th. Numbers increased in September, with 310 at Wistow Clough on the 18th the highest count, with the regular flock at Raker Lakes, Wheldrake, peaking at 156 on the 10th. Counts of 120 were made from Bank Island on the 12th and Bolton Percy Ings on the 29th, with 100 at Acaster Airfield on the 8th. Counts gradually increased through October as more birds arrived from the north, with 500 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 31st the highest count there. In the LDV numbers rose to 1000 at Bank Island/Elvington on the 28th, with numbers remaining static the following month, before rising dramatically in December. 4700 were counted in the LDV on the 15th, before flooding caused the birds to disperse later in the month, with only 500 recorded at Wheldrake Ings on the 28th and just 20 the next day. A count of 500 at Crockey Hill on the 1st December was notable.

Monthly WeBS counts for Golden Plover

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	1062	4030									800	4200

**Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

Five records of this handsome species were an improvement on the two in 2019. Single spring birds were noted at NDC on 26th March, with another there on the 5th to 7th April, which may have been the same bird as the one in March. One flew south over Bolton Percy Ings on 13th October with a single north over Bank Island in fog on 7th November. Finally, one was at NDC on 15th November.

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*

*Red listed*

*Passage migrant and casual breeder*

A decline in records following a decent number in 2019. An unseasonal record was one at Castle Howard on 22nd February. More typical were a series of passage birds during May and June: singles at Bank Island and Heslington East on the 11th, seven in the LDV on the 19th, with four at Bank Island the next day and singles at Wheldrake Ings and Bank Island on the 20th and 24th respectively. One at Bank Island on 7th June was followed by three at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th, the last spring migrants. It is assumed that most of these late spring birds were of the *tundrae* subspecies.

The only autumn record was of one at Bank Island on 20th September.

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

*Passage migrant and scarce breeder*

A reasonably good year for this species with a doubling of breeding pairs from 2019. The first bird of 2020 was at Heslington East on 21st March, five days earlier than in 2019 and almost two weeks earlier than 2018. A single was present in the Melbourne/Thornton area the next day, followed by a displaying bird over Acaster Airfield pool on 5th April and two at Heslington East the next day. One flew over Clifton in the early hours of 7th April, with another over Heslington East the next day. Singles were also noted at NDC on the 9th and Naburn Marina on the 10th.

Four pairs bred in the area, at Bank Island, Heslington East, SHL and near Wheldrake, with up to four birds present at Bank Island during May and June, increasing to nine by the end of June. One at Strensall Common on 25th May was notable and may have been a non-breeding bird. Birds were still present at Bank Island in July, though five were seen to head off south at dusk on the 1st. Four were still there on the 12th, with the last bird reported from Heslington East on the 3rd. A single was at Wash Dike, Skipwith Common on 3rd July, two at Ozendyke Ings on the 8th and one there on the 10th. A single late individual was at Ozendyke Ings on 28th August, the last of the year.

### **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*

*Red listed*

*Passage migrant*

Two early singles were recorded over Acomb, York and Gilling East on 4th April, the first of the year. Birds arrived back in the LDV from 21st April, with a single at Storwood, increasing to 15 in the roost at Wheldrake Ings the next evening. The roost increased to 20 the next day and 76 by the 29th. The roost tailed off rapidly in early May, with seven in the roost at Wheldrake Ings on the 6th. Later in May, three were at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th, two the next day and a late bird at Brighton Meadows on the 24th. Elsewhere, a single was recorded at Hessay on 22nd April, with five at Foggathorpe on 6th May and one recorded at night over Clifton, York, on 18th May.

As usual, much scarcer in the autumn, with one in the LDV on 29th July and three south over Wheldrake Ings on 2nd August notable. A single over Osbaldwick was recorded the next day. Two which flew from the Low Grounds and then over Bank Island on 5th September were the last of the year.

### **Curlew** *Numenius arquata*

*Red listed*

*Winter visitor, passage migrant and migrant breeder*

*BBS 4/33*

Numbers in January were lower than in 2019, with a peak of 43 at NDC on the 28th and 40 at Wheldrake Ings at the end of the month. The first birds arrived back on territory in the LDV on 15th February, when display was noted, whilst numbers in the valley were swelled by passage birds, peaking at 123 by the 21st, including a count of 70 in the Melbourne area. Eleven at Bolton Percy Ings on 19th February was the highest count away from the LDV.

By March, most pairs were back on the breeding grounds, with 46 pairs recorded in the LDV, which was down on the total from 2019. Breeding territories

were recorded from another 26 sites (single pairs unless indicated), including Acaster Church Ings (two pairs), Acaster South Ings (four pairs), Acaster Selby, Beningbrough, Bishop Wilton (two pairs), Bolton Percy Ings, Brighton, Brumber Hill, Catterton, Foggathorpe, Fulford Ings, Heslington Tillmire (two pairs), Hessay Pond (two pairs), Huby, Kirkby Wharfe, Laytham, Meltonby, Menthorpe Lane (North Duffield), Milford Common, Naburn, Ozendyke Ings, Poppleton, Rufforth Tip, Scagglethorpe (Poppleton), Strensall Common (three pairs, down from eight last year) and Ulleskelf.

Towards the end of June, post-breeding flocks built up, with a peak of 97 at Bank Island/Wheldrake Ings on the 26th, 13 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 28th (six on the ings, seven flying over) and 12 at Acaster Malbis on the 14th. Birds soon depart the area following these post-breeding gatherings. The peak count in July was 21 at Bank Island on the 1st and 12 at Bolton Percy Ings the next day. Twelve were also seen flying over at Skipwith Common on the 9th. Records continued to decline in August, with counts of seven at Wheldrake Ings on the 4th and at Elvington on the 29th, the peak. Ten roosting on the Low Grounds, Wheldrake Ings on 1st September, a single at Aughton on the 15th and three at Wheldrake Ings on the 24th were the only records in what is normally a quiet month for this species. Numbers remained low through the autumn, increasing slightly in late November with twelve birds residing at Wheldrake Ings during December.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*  
*Scarce passage migrant*

YOC Amber listed

One flew northwest over Bank Island mid-morning on 25th September (AF).

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

Red listed

A single was at NDC on 4th January. Numbers gradually increased in the LDV during January, from seven on the 19th rising to 11 by early March. An impressive flock of 157 arrived at Wheldrake Ings on 20th March, with presumably an additional five at Bubwith Ings two days later. The Wheldrake flock increased to 165 by the 23rd, with 216 between NDC and Wheldrake Ings on the 26th. 121 from NDC on the 9th was the highest April count, with numbers dropping after this to 55 by the 17th, at Wheldrake Ings. After that the only reports were of three (including a displaying pair) there on the 22nd, the same day as a pair was at NDC and a late single at Bank Island on 13th May.

Four at Bank Island on 17th June may have been very early return passage migrants, possibly non-breeding birds, or failed breeders. Sixteen arrived at Bank Island on 27th June, departing at dawn the next day. A single at Ozendyke Ings from the 4th to 8th July was followed by nine at Ryther Ings on the 7th, with seven at Ozendyke Ings on the 10th which left southeast. Two were at Wheldrake Ings on the 16th, followed by a single at Heslington East on 9th August and two at Melbourne on the 31st. Six at the Low Grounds on 5th September later flew over Bank Island. There were no more autumn records until one arrived at Bank Island on 26th October, which remained there. A second bird arrived in the area on 15th

November, with an unexpected increase to 13 at the end of December.

**Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* Amber listed  
*Scarce passage migrant, usually in spring*

None in 2020 after records in five of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

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

Single adults at Bank Island on the 12th and 13th June and Ozendyke Ings on 4th July were unusual summer records, as was a summer-plumaged bird on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 15th August and NDC on 1st September. More typical was one at NDC from the 17th to 22nd December.

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

Fewer Ruff were present in the LDV in the first part of the year, compared with 2019. In January, 51 were recorded in the LDV as a whole on the 11th, with a peak count of 73 at Aughton Ings on the 27th. Numbers remained static during February, with 75 at NDC on the 1st the peak. 44 remained into March, with the flock dwindling to 36 by the 22nd and down to 13 by the 4th. Singles at Wheldrake Ings on 20th May and 11th June were late spring migrants.

The first returning bird, a moulting male, was at Ozendyke Ings on 4th July, remaining until the 9th. This was followed by another male there on 27th August, before a small influx of nine at Low Grounds, Wheldrake on 29th August in response to some unseasonal flooding. These remained in the Storwood/Wheldrake Ings area until the 10th. Two were at Ozendyke Ings on 1st September. There were no further records until 10th October, when a single flew west at Wheldrake Ings, followed by the first returning winterer at NDC on the 25th, joined by nine others from the 31st. The flock at the south end of the LDV increased to 26 in late November, and then a peak of 88 by the 28th, 70 of which were at Ellerton Ings.

Monthly WeBS counts for Ruff

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	51	48	44								26	47

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

The first since 2016, a juvenile was on the riverbank at NDC on 3rd September, seen again later in the day at Thorganby Ings (CSR, AF).

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

None in 2020 after records in four of the past ten years, most recently 2019.



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

Numbers were a little down on 2019 with 121 in the LDV on 11th January the peak count in the first winter period. The count increased to 203 at NDC by 8th February, but tailed off soon after, with 50 at Ellerton Ings on 3rd March down to 13 at Bubwith Ings on the 15th. No birds remained in April, but some late spring passage was noted in the LDV, with one on 17th May, followed by two on the 21st, one of which remained until the next day, with three on the 23rd, decreasing to two on the 26th and 27th.

The first returning bird was an adult at Wash Dike, Skipwith Common on 19th July (a great record for the site) and two at Wheldrake Ings the same day. The next was a single adult at Wheldrake Ings on 10th August, with two a week later at Heslington East, which remained until the 24th. One was at Bolton Percy Ings on the 29th, with singles at NDC on 3rd September and Heslington East on the 4th. No further records were received until 30th October when one was at Bolton Percy Ings. The LDV wintering flock started to assemble towards the end of November, with a peak of 30 on the 22nd, and there was a good count of 23 at Ozendyke Ings on the 11th, which flew off southwest. By December, the LDV count had increased to 107 on the 7th and then 119 by the month end, most of which were on Ellerton Ings.

Monthly WeBS counts for wintering Dunlin in the LDV

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	121	207	13								29	102

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola**Red listed**Winter visitor and resident breeder*

Reported from nine sites during January, with notable counts of six at Allerthorpe Common on the 5th and six at Skipwith Common on the 12th surpassed by 20 at Thorganby on the 23rd. Smaller numbers were recorded in February and March, with three at Wheldrake Ings on 8th February and three at Bielby on 21st February of note.

Roding birds were noted from seven sites during the spring and early summer: two to three birds at Allerthorpe Common, three at Bishop Wood, one at Sand Hutton, two at Skipwith Common, one at Strensall Common, one at Thorganby Crook Moor and two at Yearsley Moor. A handful of singles was reported between September and November from the usual sites, with three at Thorganby on 24th November. Colder weather increased numbers in the area with birds reported from 13 sites in December, with five at Skipwith Common on the 2nd the only count of multiple birds.

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

An excellent year, with a strong autumn passage noted. Advances in thermal imaging equipment are increasing the frequency with which this species is

detected in our area, notably the LDV where this technology is enabling more accurate counts of a difficult-to-survey species.

One or two were noted from Bolton Percy Ings, Heslington East, Milford Common, NDC, Riccall, Skipwith Common, Thornton and Wheldrake Ings during January and February, with three at Heslington Tillmire on 26th February being the highest count. Higher numbers were recorded in March, possibly as birds passed through the area on spring migration. The highest counts were of four at Wheldrake Ings on the 21st and three at NDC on the 18th, while one at Milford Common on 17th March and two at Riccall on 6th April were the only records away from the LDV. Three at Wheldrake Ings on 22nd April were the last of spring.

The first returning birds were six at Bank Island on 16th September, with two there on the 18th and six again on the 21st. A remarkable count of 11 was made at Bank Island on 1st October, with six there on the 6th, three of which were caught and ringed. Twelve were present at Bank Island on the 7th, six of which were ringed and four were at Wheldrake Ings the same day! Good numbers were seen elsewhere, including four at Skipwith Common on 15th October and five at Ryther Ings on the 18th. Five were present at Skipwith Common on the 5th and 6th November with two at Wheldrake Ings on the 16th and eight at Riccall Ings on the 23rd. Birds were recorded from several sites in December, with peak counts being five at Bolton Percy Ings on the 20th, three at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th and twos at Riccall on the 1st, Skipwith Common on the 22nd and Heslington East on the 31st.

**Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago*

*Amber listed*

*Resident and migrant breeder and passage visitor*

At the beginning of the year, 160 were in the LDV on 11th January, 150 of which were in the Melbourne/Thornton area. Fifty were at Skipwith Common during the month, with counts of 34 from Barmby Moor and 22 at Bolton Percy Ings. The following month good numbers were still present with a peak count of 90 at NDC on the 20th, with 30 at Elvington Airfield on the 25th, 34 at Heslington Tillmire on the 26th and 43 at Melbourne on the 28th. In March, the largest count was 26 at Melbourne on the 10th. Birds were back on territory just after the middle of the month, with three 'chipping' over Bubwith Ings and two over NDC on the 18th, and 19 displaying across the LDV three days later. The first drumming birds were heard at NDC on the 25th. Birds were still moving through the area in April, with some drumming in the LDV. Birds were present during the breeding season at Seaton Ross, Strensall Common and Ulleskelf Mires although these could relate to late spring migrants, with drumming noted at Heslington Tillmire in mid to late April. Up to nine were drumming at Wheldrake Ings and recently fledged young were seen there later in the spring.

Following breeding, numbers began to build up, with counts of 16 at Wheldrake Ings in late July and ten at Bolton Percy Ings at the end of August. In September, a peak count was 150 at Bank Island on the 16th, with up to 21 at NDC on the 23rd and 20 at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th. The increase continued the following month, with 110 at Skipwith Common on the 15th notable, with

possibly up to 400 in the LDV as a whole. 52 on wet stubble at Riccall Ings was a good count as was 23 at Ryther Ings on the 18th. Numbers remained high into November, with up to 100 at Melbourne Ings during the month, part of a LDV count of 290 on the 14th, rising to over 400 in mid-December. In the Wharfe valley, 37 were counted at Ryther Ings on 13th December.

Monthly WeBS counts for wintering Snipe in the LDV

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
LDV	167	111	286								290	460

*Correction to 2019 Report:* The "remarkable count" of 56 Snipe at Heslington East on 5th April was actually a count from Heslington Tillmire.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant*

The first spring migrant was recorded at Heslington East on a typical date of 16th April, two weeks earlier than in 2019. This was followed by one at Bank Island two days later, with one to two at Heslington East from 28th April to 6th May, before rising to five there on the 10th. Thereafter, three were at Heslington East on 12th May, with one at Fulford Ings the next day, one at Wheldrake Ings on the 14th, two at Heslington East on the 19th and the last spring migrant at Bank Island on the 20th.

One at Wheldrake Ings on 15th June was presumably a failed or non-breeding bird, followed later in the month by singles at Bank Island on the 20th and Bolton Percy Ings on the 30th. Up to two were at Ozendyke Ings in early July, with further singles at Milford Common, NDC, Rufforth Landfill Lagoons and Wheldrake Ings. A count of nine at Heslington East on 11th August was the highest of the year. One to three were present at several sites in late August and early September, with two at Heslington East on 19th September seemingly the last of the year, before a surprise single at Ulleskelf Mires on 15th December.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant and winter visitor*

Single wintering birds were recorded from six sites between January and March, with two birds present at Melbourne on 13th January. Three passage birds dropped in at the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 15th April before flying off and another single was at Wheldrake on 30th April.

The first returning bird was a single at Bank Island on 8th June, with the same or another there on the 11th and two from the 12th to the 14th. Four were present at Bank Island on 27th June, with three at Wheldrake Ings the same day, while a single was at Acaster Airfield on the 25th. Numbers built up during July; three were at Ozendyke Ings on the 11th, eight at Bank Island on the 13th, a single at Acaster Airfield on the 21st, eight at Wheldrake Ings on the 25th, and two at Skipwith Common on the 29th. Nine on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st and 3rd August remained until mid-month with smaller numbers thereafter until a count of

nine again on the 26th, with seven residing from the 27th to the 29th. One to three birds were present during August at Acaster Airfield, Bolton Percy Ings, Elvington, Ozendyke Ings, Melbourne, Skipwith Common and Stillingfleet. Smaller numbers were present in September, with peak counts of five in the LDV on the 1st, two at Bolton Percy Ings on the 2nd and four at Skipwith Common on the 6th, dwindling yet further in October when singles were reported from five sites. Numbers remained static in November, before an increase in December. Counts of three at Ulleskelf Mires on the 27th and singles at Melbourne and Riccall were superseded by four at both Foss Dyke and Rufforth Landfill Lagoons on the 30th.

**Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* (ex BBRC 2019) YNU

*Very rare vagrant*

York's second Lesser Yellowlegs was discovered on the pool at Wheldrake Ings at dawn on 1st October (CSR, MFJ). It then relocated to Bank Island (DMB) before flying off northwest mid-morning. It returned to Bank Island in the evening and was present on site for the next two days but had departed by the 4th.

**Redshank** *Tringa totanus*

*Amber listed*

*Passage migrant, migrant breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 1/33*

Up to 19 were present in the LDV during the first half of January, eight of which were at East Cottingwith. Numbers increased during February to a peak of 56 on the 8th, with 50 at NDC on the 3rd. The high numbers continued into March, with 67 in the LDV on the 21st including a flock of 51 at NDC. Elsewhere, two were at Langwith Stray and singles at Heslington East and the Heslington Tillmire late in the month. Birds were back on territory in the LDV, with birds displaying at Wheldrake Ings, from the 19th. Twenty pairs bred in the LDV, with a pair at Heslington Tillmire too, while single migrants were at Acaster Airfield and Heslington East early in April. Following breeding, up to ten were at Bank Island from 14th June, 23 at Wheldrake Ings on the 14th (which were additional to those at Bank Island) and eleven at NDC on the 16th. Elsewhere in June, there were singles at Hemingbrough and Heslington East.

Early autumn migrants noted were singles at Ozendyke Ings on 2nd July (with two there on the 7th), at Acaster Airfield on the 9th (a juvenile), at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th and at Bolton Percy on 6th August. The wintering flock arrived back in the LDV from 9th November, when 30 were at Bubwith Ings. Two were at Bolton Percy Ings on 25th November and singles at Heslington East and Red House Reservoir on the 26th. Towards the year-end 42 were at NDC on 22nd December and one at Acaster Malbis on the 27th.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola*

*Amber listed*

*Scarce passage migrant*

Four spring records conceivably relate to one mobile individual as a bird was heard flying over Thorganby after dark on the 5th, 6th and 7th May and at NDC on the 6th. There were two autumn records: an adult at Ozendyke Ings on 11th July and one at Bank Island on 25th August.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus*  
*Scarce passage migrant*

YOC Amber listed

Two juveniles were photographed on the pool at Wheldrake Ings on 24th September (MSc).

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

Amber listed

The first spring migrant was at Wheldrake Ings on 22nd April. Several were noted in May, with two at Thornton Ellers on the 1st and singles recorded at various locations in the LDV. The only bird away from the LDV was a single at Heslington East on the 7th.

One at Bank Island from the 21st to 24th June was assumed to be the first returning bird. The next appeared a few weeks later at Ozendyke Ings on 10th July with one at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th. A single at Dunnington on 8th August preceded two at Heslington East from the 9th, one of which resided there until the 15th. Two at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th were superseded by three on the 23rd. Further singles were seen at Ozendyke Ings on the 29th and Storwood/Wheldrake Ings also on the 29th, with a flock of five at Bank Island on the 31st and three at NDC the same day. Six were at NDC from the 1st to 4th September, with four present on the 6th and 7th. Elsewhere one to four were noted around the LDV which may have related to the same individuals. The last record was of a single which was present from mid-September in the Wheldrake area, being last seen there on the 26th.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla*  
*Scarce passage migrant*

YOC Red listed

With annual sightings since 2015, 2020 saw two turn up. An adult visited NDC on 6th February, but it was the second bird of the year, a juvenile that turned up at Heslington West, which caused more of a stir. Found on 30th August (JJ) this confiding bird remained on the lake until 3rd September, allowing many local birders to see it at close quarters.

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

Amber listed

BBS 2/33

In January, the roost at Wheldrake Ings held 10,000 on the 2nd, increasing to 12,000 on the 3rd and 15,000+ by the 4th. At Heslington East, there were c.1000 passing over in a murmuration-like movement late afternoon on the 13th and 1000 were at NDC on the 18th. Early in February there were 2500 at the roost on the 8th, but few counts thereafter until the 29th, when there was an estimated 10,000 present again. On 1st March, 6000 roosted, falling to 500 by the 7th, with just 150 at Aughton and Ellerton Ings on the 25th. Also on the 7th, 1500 were at Kirkby Wharfe, while 400 were at Acaster Malbis on the 8th, 250 on the river and adjoining farmland at Naburn on the 14th and 230 at Wharfe Ings on the 19th.

The only double-figure counts of April and May were 21 on 1st April at Redhouse Reservoir and 23 at Brumber Hill on 8th May. Of 13 at Wheldrake Ings

on 22nd May, a pair was nest building – though the attempt failed and the birds moved on at the end of the month. Three at Norton on the 31st included recently fledged young while the first returning fledged bird to the LDV was one that arrived at Aughton on 26th June.

Flocks in the hundreds were seen again from early July: 300 were at Bolton Percy Ings on the 2nd and 300 on floods at Ozendyke Ings on the 3rd, peaking at 770 on the 4th (a spot count recorded 95 adults and 29 juveniles), with 300 there on the 7th, the same day as 400 at Ryther Ings. The 11th saw numbers beginning to build in the LDV, with 130 at Wheldrake Ings, while 150 were on fields near Bolton Percy on the 29th and 150 at Heslington East on the 31st. In August counts in the hundreds came from Bolton Percy Ings, Ozendyke Ings – where the peak monthly count was 1060 – and Riccall. Passage in August included 79 northwest over Bank Island on the 15th. In September, counts in the low hundreds also came from Bank Island, Heslington East, Naburn and Wistow Clough, while some passage late in the month saw birds mostly moving northwest. On 4th October 1000 were in fields by Loftsme Bridge, 500 were at Ozendyke Ings on the 5th and 300 at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th. 420 flew northwest and 96 south at Bank Island on the 9th, when 500 were at Bolton Percy Ings. On the 17th, 490 were seen heading out from roost at Wistow Clough, 2100 were loafing at Spaldington Common on the 22nd and c.1000 on newly sown fields by Acaster Airfield. 350 were feeding on abattoir waste on a field near Riccall on the 25th and 400 were at Bolton Percy Ings on the 30th. Flocks numbering several hundred were seen at various sites in November including 600 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 5th, 400 on floods at Naburn Ings on the 9th and 2000 at Kirkby Wharfe (peak count for the site) on the 11th, the same day as 600 at Wharfe Ings. At least 1000 were in a large mixed gull flock at Spaldington on the 15th and 400 flew over Hull Road Park on the 21st. December started with 300+ at Heslington East on the 1st. In the LDV, 800 were at NDC on the 12th and 2000 at Wheldrake on the 13th, attracted by the flooding, rising to 6000 by the 19th with two leucistic birds amongst them. 10,000 roosted there on the 28th, markedly fewer than the c.35,000 of 2019. Elsewhere 300 were loafing on the river at Redhouse Reservoir on the 29th.

There were a couple of interesting sightings of ringed birds in York. The first was an adult (Ring JY64) seen on 7th February; ringed in Oslo, Norway in 2015, the recovery website showed this bird had also visited York in the winter of 2015/16. A 1st-winter bird seen on 24th December was ringed as a chick in May 2020 in North Jutland, Denmark (Ring VA5818).

**Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

YOC

*Passage migrant and scarce winter visitor*

None in 2020 after records in seven of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

**Franklin's Gull** *Leucophaeus pipixcan*

BBRC

*Very rare vagrant*

An adult bird in winter plumage was found at NDC on 12th December (OM). Remarkably it was re-found the next day at Thorganby Ings (JLe), allowing several

locals to see this new species for the YOC area. See finder's account on page 140.

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

A decent year for this species after a poor one in 2019. The first records of the year came from the roost at Wheldrake Ings, with an adult there on February 26th (DMB) and three there on the 29th (JLe).

The year saw more records away from the LDV than usual, with single birds observed at Redhouse Reservoir on April 26th (NH), Thornton Lock (Pocklington Canal) on 21st May (NC) and one near Bishop Wood on June 17th (JG). August was the peak month with an adult found on the 3rd at Ozendyke Ings (PD), the same location hosting five individuals a week later on the 10th (PD). The next day a 2nd-summer bird was found at Bank Island and an adult was at NDC on the 31st. The remaining reports were all from the LDV with an adult present on 4th November at NDC, which was replaced the next day by a 1st-winter bird (DW). Finally, an adult and a 1st-winter were seen together in the gull roost at Wheldrake Ings on 15th December (DR).

**Common Gull** *Larus canus* Amber listed  
*Abundant winter visitor and passage migrant* BBS 1/33

Of 5000+ in the LDV, 3000 roosted at Wheldrake Ings in early January and 500 at NDC on the 18th. In February 800 were at the Wheldrake roost on the 8th, with an estimated 5000 there on the 29th and into early March, falling to 500 by the 7th. There were more counts above 20 away from the LDV compared with 2019: 55 were on the Knavesmire on 1st March (with 50 there on the 20th), 258 at Newburgh Priory on the 6th, 30 at Kirkby Wharfe on the 7th, 20 at Heslington East on the 14th and 27, some in 1st-year plumage, at Stamford Bridge on the 27th. In April, 38 at Heslington East was the month's peak count, while spring passage movement at the end of the month saw 23 sub-adults and four adults at Wheldrake Ings, with nine still there on 5th May. 19 were following a plough at Thornton Lock on the 21st and in June up to 30 passed though the LDV most days, predominantly 1st-year and sub-adult birds.

After single-digit counts in July, 33 flew west over Bolton Percy Ings on 8th August, then single-digit numbers passed through the area through to late September. On 27th September, 32 flew north at Bank Island. On 17th October, 39 headed north from Wheldrake Ings and 160 were at Spaldington Common on the 22nd. During November, 100 were at NDC on the 3rd, 50 on fields near Riccall on the 11th and 100 at Spaldington Common on the 15th (part of a huge mixed-gull flock). Counts at the Wheldrake Ings winter roost were much lower than in 2019, reaching 800 on 13th December, with 1500 there on the 21st and 6000 on the 28th following extensive flooding.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus**Amber listed**Winter visitor and passage migrant**BBS x/33*

During January and February there were up to 400 in the LDV, mainly at Wheldrake Ings and in the NDC/Ellerton/Aughton area: 100 roosted at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd, and again on the 19th, while 100 were at Bubwith Ings on the 25th. On 29th February 205 were at the Wheldrake Ings roost, dropping to 120 on 1st March and only 12 by the 7th. However, 110 were at Derwent Cottage Farm on the 21st and 66 at NDC on 3rd April. At Heslington East 17 flew north on 4th April; after that, counts were in low single-digits (apart from July with no records) to mid-September.

On 18th September 21 flew north at Bank Island, with small numbers northwest over later in the month too. Forty were in a field near Barlby and 50 in a mixed gull flock in a field west of North Duffield village, both on 19th October. The largest count of the year was 670 at Spaldington Common on 22nd October, while 50 were feeding on abattoir waste near Riccall on the 25th, with 100 there on 11th November. Mixed gull flocks at Spaldington Common held 366 on 15th November and 300 flew over Hull Road Park on the 21st. During December, 200 were at NDC on the 12th, but 12 on the 28th was the highest count at the gull roost at Wheldrake Ings.

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

A very poor year for this scarce but regular species with just a single record received – a 1st-winter bird appeared in the gull roost at Wheldrake on 21st February (LDV Blog).

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

A slight improvement on last year's single record; what was to become a long staying individual, a 1st-winter bird, was found at Riccall on 4th January (TJ), with one into the roost at Wheldrake Ings on 4th February. The Riccall bird was seen on most days until 19th February, whilst back at Wheldrake Ings two 1st-winters were seen in the roost on the 29th (JLe); one seen there on 1st March (DMB) and then at Derwent Cottage Farm on the 21st (LDV Blog) was the last of the year.

**Kumlien's Gull** *Larus glaucoides kumlieni**YNU**Very rare winter visitor*

None in 2020, reported in five of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus**Red listed**Winter visitor, passage migrant and recently colonised breeder in small numbers**BBS 13/33*

In the first winter period up to 600 were in the gull roost at NDC early in January, and 200 roosted at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd, increasing to 500 on the 11th, though only 100 on the 19th, while 200 were at Bubwith Ings on the 25th. In



## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2020



Left to right and top to bottom

**Kittiwake** © Duncan Bye  
**Mediterranean Gull** © Adam Firth  
**Iceland Gull** © Jono Leadley  
**Yellow-legged Gull** © Tim Jones  
**Short-eared Owl** © Adrian Hotson  
**Hoopoe** © Claire Dyson  
**Hobby** © Josh Hutt

February, 170 were at Riccall on the 4th, 200 at Wheldrake Ings (WeBS) on the 8th and 420 into the roost there on the 29th. Numbers dropped rapidly in March from 150 on the 1st to just 15 by the 7th. Elsewhere the only count above 20 was of 90 at Nether Poppleton on 29th February. Higher counts in late spring and the summer months included 50 at Crossmoor Lane (near Haxby) on 30th March, 76 at Brumber Hill on 27th April, 30 at Acaster Airfield on 11th May, 50 at Thorganby Ings on 16th May and 40 at SHL on 23rd June.

There was no confirmation of breeding in York for the second year. In March a pair was prospecting chimneys in Fulford (but then moved on), a pair took up residence in Dringhouses and courtship display was also noted at Heslington West. Display was also seen at Rawcliffe Lake in April and an adult and juvenile were seen at Bishopthorpe on 17th April. The only confirmation of breeding came from Norton where five on 31st May included recently fledged young, though 27 at Heslington West on 1st September included eight juveniles with two of the adults, including one vigorously 'red spot' begging for food.

On 22nd October 420 were at Spaldington Common, with at least 500 there on 15th November. Also in November, 300 were at Riccall on the 11th and 600 at Hull Road Park on the 21st. In the LDV, 50 at NDC in November increased to 140 there on 12th December. On 13th December 128 dropped in for a wash at Redhouse Reservoir, the same day 200 were at Bolton Percy Ings – with 70 of these still present on the 14th. The 19th saw 230 on fields at Milford Common, with 420 there on the 22nd (peak count for the month). The gull roost at Wheldrake Ings held just 100 on the 28th.

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*  
*Scarce winter visitor*

YOC Amber listed

A slight increase in records after a couple of lean years for this species. On 4th January a 1st-winter bird was found feeding amongst other large gulls on farm waste near Riccall (JLe), with a different individual also there on the 11th. It was present in the area until at least February 15th (CG). An adult was observed in a field at Acaster Malbis on the 29th (JD), with another 1st-winter into the roost at Wheldrake Ings the same day (JLe).

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

YOC Amber listed

Another species which has seen an increase in records in the past few years, benefitting, along with other gulls, from the farming activity around Riccall and Skipwith. An adult was found there on 7th February (DR) with a 3rd-winter bird at Wheldrake Ings on the 29th. NDC held a 2nd-winter bird on 2nd April (TJ) with an adult also there on the 12th (DS) and a 2nd-calendar-year bird was at Wheldrake on 2nd May (TJ). Four found at Riccall on 30th June stayed into August, with five present there on the 12th (DT). One was at Brumber Hill for a week from 14th September (AS), whilst back at Riccall, five adults and a juvenile were seen there on 19th October (TJ). Finally, in November one was also present at Riccall from the 2nd until the 11th.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*  
*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 3/33*

Though reported in every month, as in 2019, the majority of counts were in low single digits, alongside some large flocks (particularly in the Riccall area) in October and November and a noticeable autumn passage.

In the first half of the year the only notable counts were 20 at Acaster Airfield on 11th May, 130 at Thorganby on the 15th, 46 on a cultivated field near Riccall on the 20th and 20 on ploughed fields near Skipwith on 6th June.

Autumn passage flocks seen in the LDV included 30 north over Bank Island on 18th September and 28 north on the 19th, 49 northwest on the 26th and 105 northwest on the 27th. VMW at Bolton Percy Ings saw 284 fly north, 24 northwest and 27 south between 16th September and 24th October. 70 were at Acaster Airfield on 19th September (and on the 22nd and 28th). In October, a small flock of 17 at Milford Common on the 5th included three of the '*intermedius*' race. Fifty were on Newburgh Priory Lake on the 11th and 300 were on fields in the Skipwith area on the 16th, with 250 present on the 19th, the same day as 250 in a mixed gull flock near to North Duffield village. On the 22nd, 91 roosted at CHL, when 200 were at Osgodby Common, and on the 25th 570 were feeding on abattoir waste on a field near Riccall. On 1st November 130 were at NDC and 500 were still in the Riccall area south of Skipwith Common on the 4th, 100 remaining to the 26th – an unusually high count for that late in the year – but no counts above four received thereafter.

**Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis*  
*Scarce passage migrant*

*YOC Amber listed*

None in 2020 after records in five of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*  
*Passage migrant and rare migrant breeder*

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 1/33*

Breeding success was limited to just one pair at Wheldrake Ings and no breeding taking place at Heslington East or NDC, in contrast to 2019.

The first to arrive in the area were two at Redhouse Reservoir on 23rd April, one seen feeding the other on the 25th. On the 24th a pair arrived back at Wheldrake immediately settling onto the tern raft; three were at NDC on the 27th, the same day as five, including two pairs, were at Wheldrake Ings. These nine were still about on the 29th. On the 30th one was at Heslington East, through to 14th May (when there were two there). However, they did not stay to breed and there were no reports after May. In May pairs were seen regularly at Wheldrake Ings and NDC. Two pairs were on rafts by the 11th, with the pair at Wheldrake Ings incubating by the 18th – though this failed. However, they looked to be laying a second clutch at the end of the month. Sightings came from Naburn Lock, Fulford Ings, Bank Island, Thorganby, Elvington and East Cottingwith during the month, presumably relating to the Heslington and LDV birds. In June, there were five at Wheldrake Ings on the 12th, and in the LDV to the end of the month. Two chicks hatched on the raft at the Pool at Wheldrake Ings on the 29th: ringed on 6th

July, they fledged on the 21st. In early July there were up to five adults in the LDV, though the pair with chicks chased them off. In addition to the family party there were two further adults around on the 25th, then seven adults and the two fledged juveniles on the 29th. Elsewhere there were five with gulls on 3rd July at Ozendyke Ings, with two adults there on the 11th, and an adult along the river there on the 12th. There were three at Redhouse Reservoir on the 10th. In August, four adults and one juvenile were at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st, the family party there on the 2nd, with one at Bank Island and two at NDC on the 3rd. Four went southeast over Bank Island on the 7th, and two were at Wheldrake Ings on the 11th.

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

There were two sightings, both in the LDV at the end of April: three flew north at Wheldrake Ings between heavy rain showers on the 29th (CSR), then the following day one went northeast over Bank Island (CSR, NCa).

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

None in 2020 after records in seven of the past ten years, most recently 2019.

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

The only evidence of one this year sadly came on 27th August in York in the form of feathers from a juvenile in a presumed Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* kill (per JLe).

**'Feral Pigeon'** *Columba livia* BBS 14/33  
*Common resident breeder*

Recorded in all months, most reports were received from urban areas and with an increase in the highest counts compared to recent years.

Concentrations exceeding 100 included 120 in the vicinity of the Knavesmire and River Ouse, York on 1st January, with 300 at Kirkby Wharfe on the 3rd and then the same number along the River Ouse, York on the 29th.

No further large counts were received until the second half of the year when the majority came from Heslington East with up to 150 in August, 120 in September, 300 in October, 150 in November and 130 in December. In addition, there were flocks totalling 250 in York on 11th October.

**Stock Dove** *Columba oenas* Amber listed  
*Resident breeder* BBS 15/33

Widespread reports came mainly from farmland in the south of the area, with the vast majority of records concerning one to four birds.

Compared to 2019 a similar number of records was received of groups of 20 or more, whilst counts of 30 or above included in January, 30 at Kirkby Wharfe on the

3rd and 50 at Milford Common on the 24th; the latter site also had 52 on 19th May and 39 on 22nd September. In November there were 150 at Wheldrake Ings on the 14th (the year's maximum count) and 30 at Hull Road Park on the 21st.

Excluding reports of pairs present, potential breeding records were received from a minimum of 26 sites, a similar number to 2019, comprising mainly of either birds singing, holding territory or in suitable breeding habitat. More substantial breeding evidence involved birds visiting nest sites at Biggin and Danesmead Wood, an occupied nest at Thornton observed on 18th May and 13th June, and recently fledged young at Melbourne on 16th July.

VMW at Bolton Percy Ings recorded a total of 350 flying south and 50 north between 30th August and 5th November, with a peak of 48 south and 17 north on 7th October.

### **Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus*

*Abundant resident breeder*

*BBS 33/33*

Continues to be a common and widespread species, increasingly encountered in more urban areas, with greatest concentrations occurring during autumn migration and in the winter periods.

At the start of the year counts of 500 or more included 500 at Yapham Road on 1st January and the same number along the Pocklington Canal at Thornton on the 6th, 700 at Ulleskelf Mires on 8th February, then 500 at Wheldrake Ings on 7th March and the same number at Bank Island the following day.

Breeding evidence included an occupied nest at Norton on 22nd May, a nest with eggs seen at Seaton Ross on 25th May, recently fledged young at Ulleskelf Mires on 14th August and a juvenile being fed by an adult at Naburn on 13th October. Birds also bred at Rufforth Tip, Stamford Bridge and Welburn.

The highest counts occurred at the end of the year, no doubt fuelled by incoming migrants, with numbers seemingly greater than in 2019. 600 flew south at Bank Island on 28th October, then in November the same site had 1200 on the 2nd, 3070 on the 3rd (including 1970 south and 500 northwest), then 5560 on the 4th, including 4760 south. Elsewhere in November there were 700 at Ings Lane, Spaldington on the 4th, with 500 at both Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton and SHL on the 5th and 27th respectively. In December there were 500 at Nun Appleton on the 5th increasing to 1100 on the 17th and 1022 roosting in trees at Fosses Farm, Laytham Lane on the 28th.

There was also an increase in VMW at Bolton Percy Ings resulting in totals of 16,210 flying south and 140 north between 1st October and 5th November, with a peak of 10,530 south on 4th November – clearly a day of heavy passage given the high number passing over Bank Island the same day.

### **Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

*YOC Red listed*

*Passage migrant and declining scarce migrant breeder*

One was on wires in Hovingham village on 3rd May (SW), and two, a male and presumed female, were in a garden in Gilling East from 3rd May through the summer to mid-July (VT). One was heard calling near Cawton on 14th May and

one, possibly two, there on the 20th (SWa). Elsewhere, one was reported near Barton-le-Street on 17th June (MB) and one flew over Bank Island on 29th June (LDV Blog).

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 11/33*

Continues to be encountered throughout the area with the majority of records concerning low, single-digit numbers.

Apart from 21 at Kirkby Wharfe on 10th January, all larger counts in excess of 20 birds occurred in the last two months of the year with 56 at the same site on 11th November increasing to 80, the year's maximum, by 5th December. In December larger concentrations also occurred in Melbourne, with the peak count there being 62 on the 14th.

Following the first courtship display noted at Brecks Farm in Haxby on 5th February, evidence of potential breeding came from a further 20 sites mostly concerning singing males, birds holding territory or present in suitable breeding habitat. More substantive breeding evidence came in the form of an occupied nest at Hessay on 1st April, eggshell found below a suspected tree trunk nest site at Heslington on 7th July, fledged young seen during the year in Acomb and in a Stamford Bridge garden, whilst two breeding attempts in Dringhouses resulted in one successful nest from which one chick fledged.

During VMW at Bolton Percy Ings four flew south and one north on 30th August, two flew south on 11th September and two flew south on 1st October.

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*

*Migrant breeder*

*Red listed*

*BBS 4/33*

As in 2019, the first returning bird was present at Melbourne, albeit four days earlier than last year, on 6th April. Further birds quickly followed with singles at Poppleton Ings on the 11th, Ellerton and Aughton on the 13th, Bank Island on the 15th, two at Allerthorpe on the 16th and singles at Strensall Common from the 17th. As April progressed the frequency of records increased and by the end of the month one or two birds had been observed at a total of at least 24 sites. During May, as more migrants arrived, the frequency of records significantly increased with over 50 sites recording between one and five birds; the most productive areas were Skipwith Common, Wheldrake Ings, along the Pocklington Canal – where a full survey produced a total of 18 calling males along its length – and Strensall Common, with an estimated three territories which is considered as consistent for the site. There were estimated to be 35 – 40 across the entire LDV. There were a number of records of hepatic phase females, all observed in May, with singles at Melbourne Ings, Thornton Ellers and at least one regularly at Wheldrake Ings.

Evidence of successful breeding came when a juvenile was observed in the reedbed at Wheldrake Ings on 24th June, then in July there were juveniles on the 1st along the Pocklington Canal at both Melbourne and Thornton Lock, with another at The Priory, Wheldrake Ings on the 4th, the latter three being fostered by Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. Further July records included an adult at

Dunnington on the 8th, juveniles at the Ferry Boat Inn, Thorganby on the 17th and at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th. One was seen heading south during a three-hour VMW at Bolton Percy Ings on the 29th; the only record after that was of a juvenile at Bank Island on 24th August.

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

*Resident breeder*

*BBS 4/33*

A total of 327 records was received, an increase on both 2018 (300 records) and 2019 (240 records). Birds were reported from every month with maxima of 53 in April and 56 in May. Fewest records were received in August and November with just eight each. In a similar pattern to 2019, 69% of the records came from SE53, 54, 64 and 74. There were no records from SE56 and 67, three from SE57 (three sites), five from SE66 (three sites), five from SE73 (three sites) and six from SE77 (two sites).

Proof of breeding came from Bolton Percy Ings (two sites), Kexby, Melbourne, Milford Common, Poppleton, Riccall (two sites) and Rufforth Tip. Breeding probably took place at Naburn Sewage Works, Thornton and Ulleskelf Mires. In June early results from the long running nestbox scheme in the LDV suggested that although pairs were still present, few were breeding, with only one brood of three ringed during the month from a box at Kexby that receives supplementary feeding. COVID restrictions curtailed the monitoring of breeding birds generally, but limited observations in the LDV suggested that the population was stable, but breeding success was rather low.

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

*Resident breeder*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 4/33*

A total of 266 records was received, a slight reduction from 277 in 2019. Birds were reported from every month with maxima of 42 records in April and 38 in May. Fewest records were received in November with just seven. The number of sites rose from 71 in 2019 to 79 in 2020. There were records from all hectads, though with just one record from both SE56 and SE67, two from SE76 and three from SE57. The largest number of records came from SE54 (47 records from six sites), SE55 (40 records from 12 sites) and SE74 (50 records from 8 sites). Slightly lower down the scale, 37 records were received from SE65, but from the larger number of 20 sites. The only notable counts of calling birds were five at Allerthorpe Common on 5th January and three there (two male and one female) on 23rd June.

Proof of breeding came from a record 21 sites: Acomb, Bishopthorpe (three sites), Bishop Wood (three sites), Bolton Percy, Brandsby, Fulford, Hassacarr NR, Heslington West, Middlethorpe Ings, Milford Common (two sites), Naburn, Nether Poppleton, New Walk Terrace (York), Poppleton, Riccall, Rowntree Park, Sand Hutton, Seaton Ross, St Nicholas Fields, Strensall Common and Yearsley Moor. In addition, breeding probably took place at Acaster Malbis, Bank Island, Brayton Barff, Melbourne, Menthorpe Lane, Norton, Riccall and Skipwith Common.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua**Resident breeder*

BBS 2/33

With 192 records from 53 sites, 2020 saw a significant increase from the 2019 figure of 131 records from 33 sites. Reports came from every month with a maximum of 56 in June and a minimum of four in November. However, the June figure was boosted with about 30 records of one bird coming from observers viewing the Red-footed Falcon near Biggin. The second-best month for sightings was the 31 reported in April. Biggin is in SE53, so not surprisingly SE53 had the most records (51 from six sites), followed by SE54 with 45 records from six sites. The highest number of sites was eight in SE63, though they only produced a total of 14 records. As in previous years there were very few records from the north of the Club area. The northern six hectads cover 40% of the Club area, but produced only seven records, just 4% of the total.

Proof of breeding came from Acaster Church Ings, Milford Common and Thornton. Breeding also probably took place at Byland Abbey, Dunnington Common, Heslington East, Hessay, Laytham Lane, Naburn, Poppleton, Ryther, Thorganby and Thorganby Ings.

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

YOC

*Scarce localised breeder and occasional winter visitor*

The ten records, including two breeding records, were similar to recent years. The first was found before dawn at Wheldrake Ings by a Bird Race team on 5th January (OM, TJ et al). February saw one at Bank Island on the 5th (CSR) and a bedraggled bird flushed from a ditch near Riccall on the 13th (DT). There was then a gap until 2nd June when one was seen at Strensall Common (DR) and proof of breeding came in late June with begging calls heard from young at Brandsby (DR) and West Lilling (DR). One was at Strensall Common on 10th July (RN), then another gap until one was caught during ringing activities at Summerfield Nursery, Upper Poppleton on 16th October (ML). The last two records were both at Skipwith Common in December – one on the 1st (OM) and the other on the 21st (LDV Blog).

**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*YOC *Amber listed**Winter and passage visitor; casual breeder*

The 12 records from five sites were a continuation of their scarce presence in recent years. All records came in the second half of the year. A single was seen at Clifton Backies on 22nd and 23rd September (FW), then in November one was in the North Duffield area on the 2nd, 14th and 15th (LDV Blog). During December one was hunting over Wheldrake Ings on the 7th (LDV Blog), another was at Milford Common (CSt) and the remaining records all came from Rufforth Tip with singles on the 20th, 28th and 29th and two on the 31st (ML, GF, AHo, GC).



**Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus*

YOC Amber listed

*Scarce passage migrant and scarce migrant breeder*

The first of the year was one heard 'churring' at Skipwith Common on 19th May (TJ): a new arrival as none were heard there during a visit the previous evening. However, subsequent surveying at dusk did not result in any more records and breeding was not suspected at the site.

By contrast, at Strensall Common it was estimated that there were four territories: three males were heard churring on 21st May (PM) and again on the 27th, in similar locations to 2019 (PeR). At least four males were 'churring' during late-May to the end of July. Wing clapping and rattling flight calls were also reported at times, and a probable female was seen circling about in an undulating flight pattern on 22nd June (PeR, JcN, RCn). A female was also seen in flight on 12th July (DR). A team of researchers from the University of York was given MOD permission to carry out some ringing on site and for two evenings mist nets were erected; one bird was caught on 15th July. This was a male, which was measured, ringed and DNA samples taken from (GD, PeR et al). The last record from there was of four on 12th August (MF).

Elsewhere, one was calling at Bishop Wood on 16th June (PD, AS, JR), and two were heard at Yearsley Moor on the 25th (NL, DR). In August two were seen flying over Healaugh (JBr) at dusk on the 8th, then on the 18th one was reported at SHL – at White Syke Plantation (eBird), the last of the year.

**Swift** *Apus apus*

Amber listed

*Migrant breeder*

BBS 10/33

The first of the year was one at Heslington East at dusk on 18th April (four days earlier than in 2019), followed by singletons at Riccall (one arriving at the breeding colony there) and Wheldrake Ings on the 19th, Nether Poppleton on the 20th, Acomb and Bank Island on the 22nd. Small numbers heading north were reported from many more sites daily thereafter. In the LDV there were 14 at NDC and 30 at Wheldrake Ings on the 28th, increasing to 40+ and 100+ respectively on the 29th after heavy showers. On 1st May a large passage movement saw 300+ over NDC and 500+ over Wheldrake Ings. Whilst 100+ were at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th, numbers decreased thereafter as birds dispersed to breeding sites with 40–50 present on the 15th and 16th. There were more counts over ten elsewhere than in 2019, including 22 seen over Haxby, 15–20 over Heslington East and 20 over the east side of Sherburn in Elmet, all on the 6th. Up to 80 were feeding high over Heslington East on the 11th with 200 there on the 23rd, 150 on the 24th and 70 on the 29th. Thirty were over Naburn on the 12th. During June between 40 and 60 were seen feeding over Heslington East on several dates, with other notable counts 30 over Rowntree Park, York on the 11th, 40 above Acaster Airfield on the 13th, and 40 at Bank Island the same day. Forty were at Biggin on the 17th, 50 over Bolton Percy Ings on the 20th and 76 at Wheldrake Ings on the 22nd when 40 were feeding over Dunnington Common. A movement in response to a cold snap in late June saw 50 south over Heworth on the 26th, 27 south over Skipwith Common on the 27th and 61 south over Wheldrake Ings on the 28th.

Breeding success appears to have been mixed. Nesting took place again at Grant's Avenue, Fulford, but in common with some other sites, two cold snaps in June badly affected birds' breeding: numbers were reported to be down on previous years and some birds bred late, fledging in early September. On 6th May birds were seen mating on the wing over Melbourne, birds were screeching above known nest sites at Stamford Bridge the same day and two were visiting a nest site at Nether Poppleton by the 9th where several occupied nests were reported subsequently, and fledglings seen on 31st July. Confirmation of breeding came from Copmanthorpe, Gilling, Huby, Knavesmire (where fledglings were seen on 6th June), Melbourne, Naburn, Osbaldwick, Stamford Bridge and York (Bishophorpe Road, Dringhouses and St. Saviourgate). At the small colony in Riccall, though seven nests in the 11 boxes were average for the site, only ten chicks were ringed and the mean brood size of 1.4 was below average. Two new adults were ringed and there were re-traps from 2011, 2015, 2017 and 2019.

During July 'numerous' birds were feeding over Rufforth Tip lagoons on the 5th, 60 feeding over Bolton Percy Ings on the 4th, 7th and 24th, 40 circling over Westfield Beck, Haxby on the 16th and 50 at Melbourne on the 24th. 150 were over Menthorpe Lane on the 26th and 130 at Bolton Percy Ings the same day. VMW saw 258 flying south over Bolton Percy Ings on 29th July, then 63 going south on 2nd August, the same day as 27 went south over Wheldrake Ings. The only double-figure counts after that were of 11–15 over Bank Island and Clifton on the 23rd, Knapton on the 30th and Acomb on the 31st. Counts were in low single-digits through September with the last of the year one at Bank Island on the 21st.

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

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 2/33*

Recorded every month of the year, from over 50 different sites with suitable habitat, with sightings mostly being of single birds or pairs. As in previous years, most reports came from areas where they are present all year notably Bolton Percy Ings, the LDV (particularly Bank Island, Pocklington Canal and Wheldrake Ings) and various sites along the River Ouse, especially Naburn.

During the breeding season reports of pairs came from Acaster Malbis, Melbourne, Newburgh Priory, Ozendyke Ings and Wheldrake Ings. A pair bred on the River Ouse at Naburn Bridge. Two were visiting a probable nest hole at Beningbrough on 8th May and food-carrying was seen at Naburn Lock on 11th May. Up to eight pairs were in the LDV, with a family party of four with two recently fledged young seen at Wheldrake Ings in late June. There were regular sightings at Milford Common and along the Wharfe at Ozendyke Ings and Bolton Percy Ings indicating probable breeding and an adult and juvenile were present at Bolton Percy Ings on 31st August.

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

YOC

Last recorded in 2016, 2020 saw at least one and probably two birds turn up in the area (the ninth and tenth records), though unfortunately neither was seen by

many observers. The first just happened to land in front of a birder's car along the York – Elvington Road on 26th September before flying off (AF: see account on page 137). What was believed to be the same bird was then seen and photographed later the same day in Nether Poppleton, feeding on verges in the industrial estate (CD). This, or another, subsequently turned up at Collingham, near Leeds, staying there for several days. A few days later one turned up at Scrayingham on 4th October in a farmyard (RBa), whilst the Collingham bird was still present.

**Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** *Dryobates minor* YOC Red listed  
Rare resident breeder

The only reports were of one drumming and calling near the southern border track at Allerthorpe Common on 23rd January (NC) and a male flew southwest over Newburgh Priory on 12th December (JR).

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* BBS 12/33  
Resident breeder

As in previous years, well reported throughout, predominantly in ones or twos, from around 90 locations (up from c.75 in 2019). Many were reported visiting garden feeders, especially early in the year. Four were at Milford Common on 21st January, up to four drumming at Brayton Barff in February, three at Yorkshire Arboretum on 7th March, three at Bolton Percy Ings on 26th April, three at Naburn on 16th May and five in and adjacent to Naburn Wood on 14th June during a BBS visit (noted as an unusually high count for there). Threes were at Biggin on 19th June and Milford Common on the 25th, at Bolton Percy Ings on 24th August and at Ulleskelf Mires on 13th September.

Drumming males were reported from mid-February and breeding confirmation came from a few locations including Allerthorpe Common and Strensall Common. A female was feeding a juvenile peanuts from a garden feeder on 11th and 12th June in Bolton Lane near Yapham, with the male seen on the latter date too. At Milford Common two juveniles were seen on 17th June. An adult and juvenile were on feeders at Bolton Percy on 11th July. At Thornton, a recently fledged juvenile was seen on 17th July, and a family of four was at Ulleskelf Mires on 14th August. Pairs bred at Rufforth Tip and at Stamford Bridge with adults and juveniles seen at both sites.

VMW at Ozendyke saw five fly south and three north between 20th August and 15th October. One flew south at Bubwith Bridge on 26th September.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis* BBS 1/33  
Resident breeder

Records, mainly of singletons, were received from around 37 locations (similar to 2019) with suitable habitat. While many sites only saw one or two records, as expected, there were more from Milford Common, Skipwith Common and Strensall Common. The only record of more than two was of three together at Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on 31st July. Reports of two (or pairs) only came

from Milford Common and Skipwith Common, though they were not thought to have bred at the latter site for the first time in decades (DT).

There was sparse evidence of successful breeding despite birds being heard 'yaffling' at several locations during the breeding season, including Bielby, Bolton Percy, Melbourne, Skipwith Common and Strensall Common. A juvenile was present at Brayton Barff on 20th July and reported again on 10th August, but breeding did not take place on the Barff itself. The only other juveniles seen were one in an orchard in Naburn on the 20th and 21st July, and one hopping about on newly-cut meadow at Hessay on 11th August.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*  
*Resident breeder*

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 6/33*

The increase in the number of records continued, with 1216 records in 2020: an almost doubling from the 697 records in 2019. Birds were reported in every month with maxima of 162 records in April and 206 in May. Fewest records were received in February with 37.

Most reports came from the well-watched Lower Wharfe Valley and LDV, which accounted for most of the 750 records from SE53, 54, 64 and 74: these four hectads providing 62% of the sightings. As in previous years fewest records came from the northern part of the Club area. The northern six hectads cover 40% of the Club area but produced only 7% of the records. The question of whether this is due to an absence of birds or an absence of observers is mentioned in the article on the 2020 Raptor Survey on page 141.

Confirmation of breeding came from ten sites: Bank Island, Brumber Hill, Elvington, Fulford Golf Course, Fulford Ings, Grimston Bar, Heslington Tillmire, Ozendyke Ings, Rufforth Tip and Skipwith. The pair at Grimston Bar nested on a pylon at the Park and Ride. Probable breeding records came from Hassacarr NR, Heslington, Heslington East, Naburn, Poppleton, Riccall and Thornton. Kestrels have bred in the centre of York (on the Minster) in the past and although a female was seen near the railway station in December, there were no reports earlier in the year to suggest breeding took place.

The vast majority of sightings involved one or two, occasionally three, birds. Counts of four were made at Crossmoor Lane on 4th April, Bank Wood on 11th July, Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd and 8th August and Menthorpe Lane on 28th December and there were five at Pool Bridge Farm, Wheldrake Road on 2nd June and Bank Island on 13th June.

**Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus*  
*Very rare summer vagrant*

*YNU*

An adult male was over the pool at Wheldrake Ings for 20 minutes on 7th May amongst a feeding flock of 11 Hobbies *Falco subbuteo*, before slowly drifting south with some of them (CSR, NCa). A 1st-summer female was found at the eastern edge of Milford Common by Biggin on 16th June (CSt) and according to the farmer had been present since the 11th. It stayed until the 20th and was enjoyed by many observers. See account on page 133. A female reported at Pool Bridge

Farm at Cockey Hill on 21st and 22nd June may have been the same bird (LDV Blog). The first sightings since 2008, if all are confirmed, these constitute the fifth, sixth and seventh records for the recording area.

Records subject to acceptance by the YNU

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

*Red listed*

*Passage migrant and winter visitor*

The total of 21 records in 2020 was above the 2011-19 mean of 16. During January singles were at Acaster Airfield on the 5th, East Cottingwith on the 11th, and Melbourne and Milford Common both on the 12th. There was then a gap until one at Huby on 9th March, followed by singles at Bolton Percy Ings on the 22nd and Bubwith Ings on the 30th. The last record in the first half of the year was one at Bilbrough on 18th April.

The first of the autumn was at Bank Island on 23rd September, with it or another there on the 30th. October saw singletons at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd and Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on the 25th. In November one was at Bank Island on the 5th, with another at NDC on the 22nd to the 24th, and one at Riccall on the 25th. A rehabilitated bird was released at Wheldrake Ings on 5th December and may have been the one seen at Bank Island on the 8th. One was at NDC on the 12th while the last of the year was a female at Copmanthorpe on the 24th. Six of the records reported the gender of the bird, of which five were females.

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

*Passage migrant; scarce and localised breeder*

*BBS 4/33*

The total of 144 records in 2020 was a substantial increase from the 88 records in 2019. The first was at Bishopthorpe on 10th April, with the next at Bank Island on the 19th. There were six in the Wheldrake Ings/Bank Island area on 27th April and two or three to the month end. The same area produced regular sightings during May with a maximum of 11 on the 7th. There was an estimate of five pairs in the LDV during June, and birds continued to be seen during July and August with the last of the year one at Wheldrake Ings on 21st September.

Away from the LDV there was a good total of 34 sightings from SE54 (especially Bolton Percy and Naburn), though with no evidence of breeding, and Strensall Common had a total of nine records from May to July. There were few records from the north of the Club area, with none from SE75 and 76, just one record from SE57, 67 and 77, and just two from SE56.

**Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

*BBS 0/33*

*Winter and passage visitor; scarce breeder plus a breeding pair at York Minster*

The 239 records in 2020 were a significant increase on the 153 records in 2019. Sightings were spread across all months of the year, with a peak of 32 records in November and a low of 12 records in February. The highest number of records (57) came from SE74 and reflected the many sightings at Wheldrake Ings. There were 46 records from SE63 (primarily NDC) and 42 from SE65, often

involving birds from York Minster. As in previous years there were few reports from the northern six hectads – just six records from two sites.

The year opened with two at NDC and a juvenile in the Lower Wharfe Valley. There were four in the LDV in mid-January and up to four wintered there during March. Two juveniles were at Wheldrake Ings on 29th April – the colour ring on one of them showed it had been reared at York Minster in 2019. Four chicks were reared for the fourth consecutive year at York Minster and seven pairs were located nesting on pylons in the LDV. Full monitoring of the LDV pairs was not possible, but it is known that ten young were reared by three of them. Another pylon-nesting pair was present in the southeast of the Club area. By the end of October three birds were wintering in the LDV and three were at NDC in both November and December.

Although the majority of records came from the LDV and the York Minster pair, there were 23 records from the Lower Wharfe Valley and 13 from Heslington East. A pair was hunting together at Aughton Ings on 3rd January, as was a pair at Ozendyke Ings on 29th December. One at Skipwith Common on 21st December joined a hunting Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, and an adult female at Wheldrake Ings on 14th November caught a Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*.

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

Overall, there was at least one sighting a month apart from March and October when there were none. All sightings except two were of singletons and as in previous years, most reports came from the Clifton/Rawcliffe area of York. Two flew over Clifton Park on 13th January and two were seen at Rawcliffe Lane on 2nd February, then singletons there on the 9th, 14th, 15th and 18th. The sole April sighting was on the 9th and one flew over calling on 21st May. The most records came in June with sightings on seven dates, with just four sightings after that to the end of the year.

Away from Clifton/Rawcliffe, one was in a garden in North Duffield on 22nd June, one flew south over Acomb on 7th July and one was on a garden feeder there on 7th November. One flew over Riccall Ings calling loudly on 18th November and the last of the year was one on Acomb Ings on 30th December.

There was no evidence of breeding taking place.

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

None in 2020, after records in four of the last ten years, most recently 2017.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* BBS 4/33  
*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

As in previous years the data received for this species indicated that it continues to be widespread throughout the YOC area, indeed the number of sightings for the year increased by over 25% from 2019. As is usual, records were mostly for single birds or small groups but there were, exceptionally, gatherings of

six, during the first half of the year on Skipwith Common on both the 20th and 29th February.

Breeding activity was, not unusually, difficult to establish despite several birds being seen in suitable breeding habitat. Firmer evidence was forthcoming from Strensall Common, where birds were seen to visit a nest site on 15th April, and pairs were reported from Fulford Golf Course on the 16th, again on 6th May, and on Pocklington Canal near Church Bridge on the 22nd. Two were also seen carrying food at Allerthorpe Common on 6th May. On 18th July two juvenile birds were seen at Skipwith Common.

In the last quarter, the largest groups observed were seven at Milford Common on 16th October and six at Wheldrake Ings on the 18th. The maximum count for the year was at Milford Common on 24th November when eight were present, and the last notable record of the year was at Bolton Percy on 9th December when there was a total of seven birds over two locations.

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

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 19/33*

2020 saw the number of submitted records for this species grow by almost 75% from the previous year but this is probably attributable as much to a greater birding footfall in the York area during the year as to any growth in the population.

Though typically seen singly and in smaller groups of up to ten there was evidence of some larger gatherings, with 12 together at Nether Poppleton on 23rd February, 18 on floodwater at Clifton Backies on 6th March, 12 at Bubwith Bridge on the 8th and 14 in Clifton Park on the 14th. There was a group of 12 at Barmby Moor on the 24th. Regular double-digit counts came from Westfield Beck/Wood, Haxby between April and December, the peak counts of 20 coming on 8th June and 22nd November. Elsewhere, Heslington East held 11 on 26th September and 12 on 24th November. At Wistow Clough, on 26th November 11 were seen leaving a single tree, possibly indicative of a roost. 12 were at Clifton Backies on 1st December, 27 were seen flying into roost at Askham Bog on the 2nd. Crossmoor Lane, near Haxby hosted 15 on the 19th and 12 were at Fulford on the 27th.

Seven were seen on a roadkill rabbit on 5th March near Naburn and two were feeding on another rabbit in Westfield Beck/Wood, Haxby on 6th July.

A pair in Heslington continued nest-building in January and February. Eight were nest-building and visiting nests in Danesmead Wood in late March and two were seen to visit a nest site at Nether Poppleton on the 28th. A nest was also seen being built there on 6th May. Breeding was confirmed with a record of an occupied nest, with a total of seven birds, in a *leylandii* in Beckfield Lane in York on 9th May and there was a pair with two young over a Naburn garden on 14th June. Single juveniles were seen at Heslington West on 20th July, and at Melbourne on the 24th. Towards the end of the year the Heslington pair was reported to have started rebuilding their nest again on 17th December.

**Jackdaw** *Coloeus monedula*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 25/33*

Sightings submitted for 2020 were down by almost a half compared with 2019. Though usually seen in smaller groups there were some larger counts. At the start of the year there were 75 along Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on 4th January and an impressive 400–500 flew in to roost with Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* at Heslington West, with a pre-roost flock of about 200 seen on Walmgate Stray earlier the same day. Later in the month, on the 24th, 60 were seen heading into roost near Thornton Lock, Pocklington Canal. Into March, 50 plus pairs were observed gathering along Main Street in Fulford, presumably pre-roost, before the group was seen partially to disperse towards the University.

Later in the year, 173 (two flocks) were at Bolton Percy, consorting with Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* on 12th October and, on the 16th, 200+ at the Heslington West corvid roost. There were 71 on Bolton Percy Ings on the 18th and 80 there on 2nd November with 70 further up the river at Kirkby Wharfe on the 11th. “Many 100s” were along Laytham Lane on the 10th as they joined a mixed roost with Rooks *Corvus frugilegus*. An even more impressive mixed corvid roost of about 2000 birds at Strensall Common on the 14th included an estimated 1000 Jackdaws; a similar spectacle being witnessed there on 5th December. The last big gatherings of the year were up to 500 at the Heslington West roost during December, 100 at Patefield Wood on the 22nd and 512 along Laytham Lane on the 28th.

Nest building was first reported from Askham Bryan on 26th March, with further nest building seen at Fulford, Heslington and Norton in April and occupied nests were observed on the Pocklington Canal at Bielby on the 12th and at Melbourne on the 28th. One was seen holding territory at Westfield Beck/Wood, Haxby on 12th May. In June two were visiting a nest site at Nether Poppleton on the 4th, and there was another occupied nest at Melbourne on the 5th, with nine birds reported. A party of 12 at Melbourne on 20th July included recently fledged young and there was further evidence of breeding with juveniles seen at Rufforth Tip, and in a garden at Stamford Bridge.

An interesting record, from Haxby on 28th March, was one showing characteristics of the ‘Nordic’ race *C. monedula monedula* (PM).

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 18/33*

Widely distributed and frequently encountered in the recording area, this species is often to be found in larger groups, with counts over 100 including:

11th January, Escrick – 150

24th January, Thornton Lock, Pocklington Canal – 104

30th January, Church Fenton – 250

26th February, NDC – 200

2nd June, Fryton – 500

6th June, Wheldrake Ings – 150

7th June, Laytham Lane – 250 and 200 on the 14th



7th July, Ozendyke Ings – 130  
 11th July, Beningbrough – 150  
 18th July, Mowthorpe – 150  
 24th July, Bolton Percy Ings – 120  
 1st August, Heslington Tillmire – 350  
 3rd August, NDC – 200  
 11th August, Wheldrake Ings – 200  
 13th September, Bank Island – 200, 300 on the 22nd and 27th  
 25th October, Bank Island – 150  
 14th November, Bank Island – 200  
 29th November, Everingham Carr – 300  
 28th December, Laytham Lane – 200

Of those established rookeries noted in previous years, the first returning birds were at their nest sites in Riccall on 21st January; repairs and building began there on 18th February. Over two sites, 32 active nests were counted at the main location and an estimated further seven at the second, a significant increase from the previous year. Between March and May active rookeries were noted at were Bilbrough ("active"), Bubwith (approximately 50 birds), Castle Howard (A64 turn-off; estimated at ten nests), Crossmoor Lane near Haxby, Everingham, Foggathorpe (three rookeries, one large), Hagg Bridge, Pocklington Canal (26 nests), Harlthorpe (12 birds), Hessay (three out of 21 nests occupied on 7th April), Kirkby Wharfe (a total of 40 nests over two sites), Laytham (ten birds), Low Lane, Heslington ('very small rookery'), Melbourne, Pocklington Canal (12 nests), Melbourne Airfield, Naburn (approximately 40 nests), Sandburn (alongside A64; 30+ nests), Sandhill Lock, Pocklington Canal (29 nests), Seaton Ross ('small rookery') and Strensall (on York Road; 14 nests). Successful breeding was evidenced by a very young fledgling ringed at Heslington East on 24th May, recently fledged young at Rufforth Tip, 15 young in a group of 28 birds seen at Thornton Lock, Pocklington Canal on 27th May, an adult with four juveniles there on 7th July and two more at Melbourne on the same date.

On 7th December, the Riccall rooks were already inspecting their nests ahead of next year's breeding season.

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

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 42/33*

Records were significantly down on the previous year's but there is no reason to believe that the population has declined significantly. Larger counts were 150 at Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on 2nd January, 134 feeding on abattoir waste in fields near Riccall on the 8th, and c.100 in the roost at Heslington West with a further 100 feeding on Walmgate Stray on the 12th. On 25th March there were 202 together at Riccall and Fulford Golf Course hosted 86 on 14th April. In March there was a flock of 69 at NDC and Fulford Golf Course held c.70 on 12th May.

Once again there was scant tangible evidence of successful breeding in the Club area. Nest building was observed at Acaster Malbis on 8th March (and again

on 3rd April), and in Naburn on the 22nd. The latter birds successfully fledged at least two young from the nest in a small conifer, with the adult birds subsequently seen taking a frog from a garden pond and, later, a blackbird chick. An occupied nest was noted on 24th April along the Wharfe between Ulleskelf and Tadcaster and recently fledged and/or juvenile birds were seen at the University of York on 2nd May, at Thornton on 13th June and again on 17th July, at Melbourne on 7th July and again on 4th September. A juvenile was seen at Poppleton on 17th June, and at Rufforth Tip.

Later in the year other large gatherings were 70 seen at Skipwith Common on 2nd October, 78 at Spaldington Common on the 22nd, 132 at Riccall on the 25th and 56 at Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton the same day. Into November there were 55 on Wharfe Ings on the 10th, 92 on Skipwith Common on the 19th, 100 on the 21st at Nether Poppleton, 70 at Wheldrake Ings the same day and 60 at Wistow Clough on the 26th. Rounding off the year, Foggathorpe held 100 on 1st December and an impressive 200 were in the Ellerton area on the 27th.

**Raven** *Corvus corax*  
*Scarce visitor*

YOC

Following the good number of sightings in 2019, observations of this species fell by 50% in 2020 and there was no evidence that last year's apparent breeding success was repeated.

The year started with two separate records of two birds on 19th January at last year's hotspot, Castle Howard (PR and JRo), with a further two seen flying north over Bank Island on 9th February. On 2nd March there was a single at Ampleforth (JP). There were no further reports until the summer when two were seen at Milford Common on 17th June (CS), one at Scackleton on 7th August (PD) and, on 6th September, one flying northwest over Sherburn in Elmet (PD). Later that month, on the 29th, a solitary bird was seen being mobbed, high up over Selby, by six Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* (DCo).

Into October, Elvington Airfield hosted one on the 23rd (LDV Blog) and a single was observed at Rufforth Tip on the 29th (CG). It was wholly fitting that the last bird of the year was, once more, at Castle Howard on the 25th (IAA).

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*  
*Scarce winter visitor*

Once again, 2020, was most definitely not a "Waxwing year" with just a smattering of sightings in the first winter period. On 26th January six were calling briefly from a tall tree at Strensall, and, on 19th February, records of two birds from both Nether Poppleton and Upper Poppleton, the final observation of the year being of "several" in Naburn on the 20th.

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*  
*Common resident breeder*

BBS 5/33

A species noted widely throughout the recording area during the year, either singly or in single figures. In contrast to previous years, only one larger gathering

of more than ten birds was reported – 14 on Skipwith Common on 7th November.

Although there were widespread observations of breeding behaviour, confirmation of successful breeding was limited. At Fulford Golf Course one was carrying food on 9th and 21st May and two families, one with four young, were feeding recently fledged birds on the 28th. In Poppleton young were being fed on 20th May, a group of recently fledged young was seen on 1st June and a party of four, including three juveniles, on 13th June. A recently fledged youngster was along Yapham Road on 24th May. At Stamford Bridge recently fledged young were seen, with presumed breeding in the observer's garden or nearby, and at Upper Poppleton young were seen in the observers' garden throughout May and June. Birds also bred at Beckfield Lane, York.

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

*Red listed*  
*BBS 4/33*

This species was, as in previous years, noted principally in ones and twos, woodland and commons being the most favoured habitats but with occasional sightings in observers' gardens. Birds were seen to visit garden feeders/bird tables in Heslington on 6th January and Gilling East (a wintering pair and a Willow Tit *Poecile montanus*) on 2nd February.

Larger counts were four at Allerthorpe Common on 27th January, five (one with a white tail) at Gilling East in March, three at Yearsley Moor on 24th July. After a report of "several" calling on 6th October at Crook Moor, Thorganby, the year drew to a close with four at Warren Wood, Dunnington on 6th November and three at Griffon Forest, Flaxton on 23rd and 24th December.

In the breeding season birds were reported holding territories. One was at Braisethwaite Wood, Howsham on 2nd March, agitated behaviour" by three birds was seen at Hagg Bridge, Pocklington Canal on 1st April, one was at Jeffry Bog on 23rd March, two at Low Hutton on 26th February and three on 23rd March, and two at Storwood on 24th April.

It was disappointing that, despite ample sightings at, for example, Allerthorpe Common, confirmation of breeding was restricted to the following locations: at Skipwith Common a juvenile was seen in a mixed flock on 10th July. It was reported that there appeared to be reduced numbers in 2020, although breeding definitely occurred. At Skirpenbeck, a pair raised four young in a garage, fledging on 4th June – the adults were seen feeding the young and juveniles visited the bird table. Breeding had been suspected there in a nearby copse in 2019. A family pair of up to four was seen at Yearsley Moor on 19th June.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus*  
*Scarce resident breeder*

*YOC Red listed*  
*BBS 0/33*

As in the previous years, this species' principal bastion continues to be the LDV, but, once again, the Lower Wharfe Valley also accounted for a significant number of sightings, although with no proof of breeding there. Away from these two areas, four were at Mowthorpe on 27th March.

Though a full survey of the LDV like the one undertaken in 2019 could not be

repeated because of COVID restrictions, pairs bred at Bank Island (two broods of two and four, of which five juveniles were caught and ringed there), Melbourne (a single pair with two fledged young) and Wheldrake Ings (three broods of four, two and three). Pairs were also reported from NDC (two), Seavy Carr (a single pair) and Skipwith Common (two). See also RBBP report on page 126.

Peak counts from other areas, per site, were as follows:

Acaster Malbis (2), Allerthorpe Gravel Pits (1), Ampleforth (1), Askham Bog (2), Bielby (1), Bolton Percy (2), Bolton Percy Ings (3), Gilling East (1), Rufforth Tip (1 – an adult caught and ringed), Milford Common (1), Osbaldwick (1), Riccall Irrigation Pond (1), Ulleskelf Mires (2) and Yearsley (1).

### **Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 29/33*

The number of reports submitted for this species was down by 50% on 2019, most counts being of one to five birds, many in gardens.

Counts of more than 10 included: 15 in York (site not specified) on 1st January, 11 in Heslington on the 8th, 12 at Wheldrake Ings on the 23rd and 18 at Church Fenton on the 30th. Into February, Danesmead Wood had 12 on the 2nd, there were 12 at Haxby on the 5th and 18 at Ulleskelf Mires on the 8th. On 9th March 15 were on Allerthorpe Common, 11 on Skipwith Common on the 14th, 11 again in Danesmead Wood on the 17th, when there were also 14 on Milford Common, 20 at the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 21st and 11 at Heslington East on the 22nd. In April, Brayton Barff held 20 on the 4th, 11 were in Rosedale Street in York on the 8th, 34 on Fulford Golf Course on the 19th, and 13 on the 20th on Allerthorpe Common. There were 11 on both Skipwith Common on the 23rd and along the Pocklington Canal on the 24th, and 14, including birds holding territory and nest building, near Marygate, York during the month. May opened with 12 on Fulford Golf Course again on the 2nd and 13 seen at Skipwith on the 29th. In August there were 12 at Skipwith Common on the 29th, there were 19 at Bank Island on 14th October, 13 at Heslington West on 1st November, 30 at Skipwith on the 25th and 14 on Skipwith Common on 30th December.

Confirmed breeding records came from Acaster Malbis, Acomb, Allerthorpe Common, Askham Bryan, Bolton Percy, Bolton Percy Ings, Fulford Golf Course, Fulford Ings, Heslington, Heslington Tillmire, Heslington West, Laytham Lane, Melbourne, Naburn, Nether Poppleton, Norton, Rawcliffe Meadows, River Wharfe (between Ulleskelf and Tadcaster), Seaton Ross, Skipwith Common, Stamford Bridge, Storwood, Strensall, Strensall Common, Sutton-upon-Derwent, Thornton Lock (Pocklington Canal), Upper Poppleton and Wheldrake Ings.

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

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 21/33*

Though still apparently common and widespread there were almost 50% fewer records received than in 2019.

Counts above ten included 11 along Museum Street in York on 10th January, 11 on the 23rd in the Danesmead Wood and River Ouse area, 11 on the 24th at

Askham Bog and 11 on the 30th at Church Fenton. Into March there were 20 at the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 21st, 13 again in Danesmead Wood on the 27th, then 12 at Fulford Golf Course on 19th April and 11 on Allerthorpe Common the next day. In late summer, there were 12 in a mixed passerine flock on Skipwith Common on 29th August, 12 at Spaldington on 6th September, up to 27 at Bank Island on 14th October, 13 on Skipwith Common on 7th November, and 15 at Colton on the 30th.

There were records of breeding birds from Acaster Malbis, Bolton Percy Ings, Danesmead Wood and River Ouse, Fulford Ings, Heslington, Heslington West, Kirkby Wharfe, Melbourne, Nether Poppleton, Osbaldwick, Rufforth Tip, Seaton Ross, Skipwith Common, Stamford Bridge, Strensall Common, Thornton, Upper Poppleton, Wheldrake Ings and York (Clifton Park and Rowntree Park).

**Bearded Tit** *Panurus biarmicus*

YOC

*Scarce visitor usually in autumn and winter*

A poor showing for this species in 2020, after a good number of sightings in the preceding six years, with hopes of colonisation in the club area still apparently unrealised.

After a single bird seen, and photographed, at Bank Island on 25th October (BE), there was just one other record, a vocal individual at Wheldrake Ings on 3rd November (SE).

**Woodlark** *Lullula arborea*

YOC

*Localised migrant breeder*

A gratifying increase in sightings of this species. Once again, the local heartland was on our lowland heaths, with Skipwith Common, Strensall Common and, less frequently, Allerthorpe Common its favoured redoubts.

Skipwith Common started the year with a bird calling near Sands Lane, then flying off to farmland on 26th February, with two in song on the 29th. By 4th March four birds were reported to be singing, with the number climbing to six by the 14th and seven by the 21st. By early April a peak of eight singing birds had been recorded and first signs of any breeding success were of an adult with food, close to a nest site on 9th June, although, worryingly, only six metres away from the remains of a recent barbecue. On the 13th one was observed collecting food and depositing a faecal sac and, by 6th July, two juveniles had been seen with a pair of adults. Into August two juveniles were seen dust bathing on the 1st.

On Strensall Common the first indication of its presence was of up to five birds, with one displaying and singing, on 13th March, with what was possibly a second singing male seen the same day at nearby World's End and, on the next day, a further report of two males and a female. By the 27th four were present: a pair, and two singing males. The maximum count in May, on the 26th, was of eight birds, confirmed by an estimate of four occupied territories, with courtship display noted. This was in line with recent years' numbers and was considered to be indicative of a stable breeding population. The last report of the year there was of one on the ground on 24th July and, frustratingly, as last year, no evidence of any

successful breeding.

On Allerthorpe Common sightings were far fewer with the only records being of one on 6th March and another noted in song flight on 26th April, with a further two birds reported there the same day.

Elsewhere there was an interesting sighting on 16th April of one in a field near Riccall in a mixed flock with wagtails (*Motacilla sp.*) and pipits (*Anthus sp.*) feeding on small flies which had apparently been attracted by turnip scraps. In view of the location this could well have been a bird from Skipwith Common.

The final sighting of the year was of one which flew north over Bolton Percy Ings on 4th October.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 26/33*

Although this species is on the Birds of Conservation Concern 4 Red List the recording area still holds a healthy population and it was gratifying that the records submitted for 2020 showed an increase of over 60% on the previous year.

In contrast to 2019 there were some large gatherings in the first winter period with 110 reported from Acaster Malbis on 11th January and a flock of 120 feeding on stubble with other passerines at Riccall on the 20th and 23rd. During the month a flock of 90 was seen at East Cottingwith on several occasions, with a similar number on arable near Bank Island early in February.

The first singing male was at Westfield House Farm, Thornton on 13th January, there were eight in song at Wheldrake Ings by the 26th, and five from a flock of 15 in farmland near Naburn the next day. In February one was singing at Allerthorpe Common on the 5th and, on the 7th, nine were taking up their old territories in Riccall. Thereafter, up to June there were numerous reports of singing males holding territory from around 55 sites, with the LDV boasting a total count of 103 on 8th March in the area from Wheldrake to North Duffield Ings, notwithstanding the widespread flooding. There were estimated to be six breeding pairs south of the old mine in Riccall by 29th March, but the observer remarked that the subsequent application of weedkiller to this site meant an uncertain future for the birds. Despite the large numbers of sightings during the year, evidence of successful breeding was limited: an occupied nest with three birds was noted on 20th June at Biggin, juveniles at Clifton Ings on the 21st, four recently fledged young were at Nether Poppleton on 19th July, and a party of nine juveniles and adults at Rufforth Tip on 11th September.

Autumn passage began on 1st August with three south over Bank Island and two more over Wheldrake Ings the same day. Small groups passed through the LDV during September; elsewhere 63 passed north over Sherburn in Elmet in a ten-minute period on the 28th and a flock of 100 at Grimston on 26th September was notable. On 1st October 130 flew southwest over Bank Island, and 110 south in a 90-minute period over Brumber Hill. Forty went south and 52 north over Wistow Clough on the 17th and 69 went south there on the 22nd. VMW at Ozendyke recorded 240 flying south and 192 north between 29th September and 4th November with a peak of 82 south and 11 north on 25th October – a much

larger movement than normal, including more birds flying north. On 20th October a day of heavy passage in the LDV saw 264 fly mostly south over Ellerton Ings, with a further 233 south on the 22nd. 41 passed south over Bank Island on the 24th when, of an estimated 500 throughout the LDV, 350 were at East Cottingwith.

Reports of late autumn and winter flocks of up to 70 birds came mostly from locations in the LDV. The peak count of the year was of at least 500 in stubble fields near Wheldrake Woods on 6th November, with large numbers throughout the LDV then. Elsewhere there were 69 on 29th October at Riccall Ings (and 70 there on 27th December), with 60 at Wistow Clough on 26th November.

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

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*BBS 0/33*

A worrying year for the species in the York area with most birds arriving very late and subsequent poor breeding success reported as hot weather gave way to a very cold wet spell at a critical time.

The first were two at Wheldrake Ings on 12th March, six at NDC on the 18th and one at Redhouse Reservoir on the 31st. Five returned to Bank Island on 4th April and started excavating holes in the artificial bank immediately, with several pairs present there by the month end. Numbers increased to 38 at Wheldrake Ings on 6th April, 20 at Beningbrough on the 7th and 42 at NDC on the 14th, but there were only low single-digit numbers noted otherwise until 100 at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th, superseded by a huge arrival of hirundines there on the 27th – a mixed flock of 800 Sand Martins and Swallows *Hirundo rustica* –, with 1400 in the LDV by the 29th. Sixty were feeding over Heslington East on 10th May.

At Beningbrough Ings there were 52 in four colonies (20, 14, 10, 8) on 2nd May, and up to 15 pairs excavating at Bank Island on the 14th. In June up to 25 pairs were present there with the first birds ringed on the 15th – including two returning young from 2019, now as breeding adults. Unfortunately, heavy rain and thunderstorms seemed to affect feeding and subsequent broods at this time failed. Ten were visiting nest sites at Acaster Malbis on 14th June and occupied nests were seen at the sandbanks at Clifton Ings on the 16th, but the outcome was unknown. After a poor year in 2019, there was an almost complete collapse of the colony at Heslington East with only 11 of 146 possible nest holes excavated at the three 'Sand Martin hotels' there by mid-June (following prolonged hot dry weather in May the sand plugs were checked in case they had baked hard: they hadn't). Thirty were feeding over the lake on the 18th, and 20 on the 27th, with four seen entering holes in mid-July but absent thereafter.

Post breeding, the only gathering of note was 75 along the River Ouse at Beningbrough on 4th July. Return passage was noted from the 7th with ten west over Poppleton and three south at Bolton Percy Ings, then 203 south at the latter on the 10th, the only three-digit count. The only count above 12 after that was 80 over Acaster Malbis on 6th September, which were the last of the year.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica**Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

BBS 24/33

One over Sherburn in Elmet and one at Wheldrake Ings, both on 25th March, were the first of the year, with the next over a week later – one at Newburgh Priory on 4th April. Singletons arrived at a further seven sites on the 5th and single-digit numbers daily to many sites thereafter. Counts of 100 or more were 100+ at Wheldrake Ings on 20th April, with 400 there on the 23rd, 500 on the 27th, and up to 1500 hirundines in the LDV – Swallows and Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* – on the 29th, including 200 at Bank Island and 400 at Wheldrake Ings.

Breeding was confirmed at Ampleforth, Appleton Roebuck, Dringhouses, Heslington, Heslington East, Melbourne, Naburn, Nether Poppleton, Norton, Riccall, Seaton Ross, Thornton, Wheldrake village and Wheldrake Ings (Tower Hide). At Rufforth a second brood fledged but the first brood was lost just before maturity, coinciding with a spell of wet, cold weather.

Post breeding 150 roosted in the reedbed at Wheldrake Ings on 16th June, peaking at 400 on the 24th, and up to 200 roosting daily in July. 'Numerous' birds were feeding over Rufforth Landfill lagoons on 5th July. In August, 204 were at Wheldrake Ings on the 15th and 150 on the 16th. At Bank Island 140 flew northwest on the 26th, when 120 were at Bolton Percy Ings. On the 29th there were 100 at Low Grounds and 200 there on the 30th. Up to 300 were at Wheldrake Ings on 2nd September; 396 flew west over Bank Island on the 3rd while 650 flew south through the LDV on the 5th and a further 500 south on the 8th. 100 passed south over Naburn on the 14th and 300 were above Heslington East on the 15th, when 120 were above the pool together at Wheldrake Ings. VMW at Bolton Percy Ings between 26th July and 7th October saw 976 flying south and 194 north with the highest counts being 380 (220 south and 160 north) on 26th August, and 135 south in one hour on 11th September. Numbers dwindled to single digits by mid-October, with singletons at Brumber Hill and NDC on the 27th the last, until a very unexpected sighting of one at Wheldrake Ings on 21st/22nd November, with presumably the same lingering individual seen at Bank Island on 2nd December!

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

Amber listed

BBS 14/33

The first were singles over Bishopthorpe and Wheldrake village on 4th April, and Naburn on the 5th. Small numbers trickled into further sites over the next few days; the first notable count at Wheldrake Ings was 100 on the 20th. The largest spring counts were 500 at Wheldrake Ings on 29th April, 300+ there (and moving through) on 1st May, 100 on the 13th and 200 at Heslington East on the 25th.

The breeding picture was rather mixed, with several areas reporting birds late to nest and then only producing one late brood. Nest building was seen at various sites including Acaster Malbis, Bank Island, Knavesmire and breeding confirmed at Beningbrough, Castle Howard, Hagg Bridge, Haxby (one pair second brooding in July), Heslington, East, Melbourne, Nether Poppleton, Norton, Stamford Bridge (one late brood), Sutton upon Derwent (pair with young about to fledge on 8th



September), Upper Poppleton, Wheldrake village, Wigginton and Yapham Mill. Whilst one pair bred at Rufforth again, it was noted that there used to be several nests there. In Gilling a late nesting pair fledged young in the last week of August with it being noted as a very poor year locally for breeding, pairs producing mostly only one late brood. A small colony in Heslington village failed and a dead female and brood of three were recovered from a nest in Ampleforth on 22nd September.

Feeding flocks were seen in late July and August, with 60 at Scackleton on 7th August, 40+ at Heslington East on the 15th and 50 at Wheldrake Ings on the 16th. Autumn passage saw 67 fly northwest at Bank Island on the 26th, and 75 south at Bolton Percy Ings during VMW on the 29th and 30th. Fifty were over Copmanthorpe on 4th September, but the largest gathering was of 150+ at Wheldrake Ings on 8th September when 78 were present over Melbourne – noted as a day of significant movement and large scale clear out from local villages where they breed. Fifty flew over Naburn on the 12th, the same day as 50 high over Acaster Malbis. Forty flew south in an hour's VMW at Bolton Percy Ings on the 13th and 60 were feeding there on the 20th. The last of the year was one at Ellerton on 22nd October.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica*

YNU

*Very rare vagrant*

The fourth for the area turned up on 25th April, among a flock of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and martins, on wires by the campsite north of Acaster Malbis. It was found by the Club's recorder, who just happened to be out for his daily lockdown exercise at the time! The bird remained in the area for 45 minutes before flying off (JLe). Remarkably, the bird was relocated that evening at Kilnsea, over 50 miles ESE.

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

YOC

*Scarce visitor*

Whilst, as expected, most sightings came from the LDV, singletons also popped up at five other sites during the year.

Three wintering birds remained in the LDV early in the year. One turned up at Castle Howard on 2nd February, and several singing birds remained along the Pocklington Canal at Bielby and East Cottingwith during the month – one between Church Bridge and Walbut Bridge on the 28th was assumed to be the over-wintering individual from Church Bridge. These three remained singing throughout March and April and on into May. In May a new male caught and ringed at Thornton Ellers on the 18th brought the total to up to four or five singing males around the valley. Elsewhere, one turned up unexpectedly in private woodland in Haxby on 7th April, singing briefly before moving on (RB). In May one turned up at Barlby on the 4th, singing and moving through dense vegetation parallel to the River Ouse (DT).

There were no more reports after one at Thornton Lock on 30th May until September when one turned up at Heslington East on the 14th, the first for the site (TJ). It was subsequently caught and ringed by the UoYRG (CB et al) on the 15th,

the same day as a juvenile male was caught and ringed at Bank Island. One was singing at Wistow Clough (PD) on the 14th and 18th and another calling and singing at Wheldrake Ings on the 20th, which continued to do so to the end of the month. Two immatures were caught there on the 21st. In October, four were at Wheldrake Ings on the 3rd and 4th, while one at the usual wintering site at Church Bridge, Melbourne on the 5th remained there thereafter. One was caught and ringed at Tower Hide, Wheldrake Ings on the 6th. Singles were at NDC on the 8th and 9th, and two there on the 11th, when another was at East Cottingwith, bringing the total in the valley to eight. Three were calling at Wheldrake Ings on the 17th to the 21st. November saw one singing at NDC on the 4th (and two there on the 11th), three singing at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th and the Church Bridge individual was present all month. During December calling birds remained at Melbourne all month, one was at NDC, and up to three were at Wheldrake Ings, with a first-year male caught and ringed there on the 7th. That brought the total ringed there to nine for the year and the eighth in the area since October (LDV Blog).

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

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 11/33*

Widespread throughout the year, mostly in single and low-double figures, with many family parties seen post breeding and some also turning up at garden feeders. Higher counts of 20 or more were 50 at Naburn Ings on 18th April (peak count for the year) and 31 at Wheldrake Ings on 21st June, with monthly maxima thereafter of between 20 and 30 to the end of the year. Twenty-two were at Milford Common on 19th August and 14th October and 20 at Bank Island on 12th September and 14th October, while 40 were at Warren Wood, Dunnington on 6th November and again on 17th December. On both the 25th and 29th November 20 were at Skipwith Common and 20 were at Heslington East on 30th December.

Successful breeding was confirmed at Acaster Malbis, Bank Island, Danesmead Wood, Dunnington (Rabbit Warren Wood), Fulford (Golf Course and Ings), Foggathorpe, Hassacarr NR, Heslington, Heslington East, Hessay, Melbourne, Nether Poppleton, Rufforth Tip, Seaton Ross (where 18 on 8th July included juveniles), Skipwith Common, Stamford Bridge, Wheldrake Ings, Yapham Road and Yearsley Moor.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 12/33*

The first was at Scoreby Wood on 1st April, followed by singletons at Bolton Percy Ings and Thorganby on the 4th. Birds flooded in thereafter to many sites, including seven at Heslington East, five singing at Brayton Barff, ten at Storwood and eight at Allerthorpe Common by the 13th. 15 were at Skipwith Common on the 16th and 15 singing on the Hagg Bridge section of Pocklington Canal on the 18th. On the 20th 21 were singing at Allerthorpe Common, 25+ were at Wheldrake Ings by the 22nd and 25 at Milford Common on the 23rd, when 31 were at Skipwith Common.

Singing birds were widespread during the breeding season. The first confirmed brood was one of eight (an unusually high number) at Rufforth Tip where seven pulli were ringed as part of the nest recording scheme about a week from fledging on 24th May (eighth egg was infertile). Interestingly one of the parents had been ringed earlier in the season at the site. At Wheldrake Ings 24 on 7th June included 12 singing and two family parties – other pairs also bred there. A pair was feeding three juveniles at Melbourne on 3rd July and other pairs also bred in the area. At Skipwith Common 14 on 18th July were mostly juvenile birds. Breeding was also confirmed at Brayton Barff (small numbers noted), Stamford Bridge, Thornton/Seavy Carr and a juvenile turned up in a garden in Acomb on 3rd August.

Double figure counts post breeding mostly came from Wheldrake Ings and Skipwith Common, though there were 16 at Milford Common on 19th August. On the 23rd, following a marked passage on the Yorkshire Coast, there was a small arrival at Wheldrake Ings bringing numbers there to 20 and to 50+ throughout the LDV. On the 29th there were 23 in a mobile mixed flock at Skipwith Common, increasing to 28 on 1st September; many of them juveniles. On 15th September three were caught and ringed at Wheldrake Ings, the last apart from singletons at Brumber Hill on the 1st and 13th October.

### **Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

*Migrant breeder and passage migrant; some birds overwinter* *BBS 28/33*

Overwintering birds at Bank Island peaked at five on 17th January, with three caught and ringed at the NNR base the previous day. In February one was singing at Thorganby on the 6th and one or two were at Bank Island during the month, where one of the overwintering birds was singing in early March.

In March, the first presumed migrants were singles singing in Scarcroft Road, York on the 5th, Heslington East on the 6th and Wheldrake Ings on the 7th. Arrivals came thick and fast after the 9th with small numbers arriving at many more sites; numbers reached 23 in the LDV on the 23rd. Though most counts were in single figures, there were 32 counts of ten or more received (despite COVID restrictions limiting areas that could be visited particularly in the north of the recording area) from 18 sites, with repeat counts coming from several. The highest were 25 at Bolton Percy on 8th April, 22 at Thorganby on the 15th, 24 at Allerthorpe Common on the 20th and 15 singing at Brayton Barff on 1st May. In August 14 were on Dunnington Common on the 11th. Fifteen were caught and ringed at Wheldrake Ings on 15th September, the same day as 52 at Rufforth Tip were ringed; this total included many juveniles as well as some adults. Of 27 ringed at Heslington East in 2020, 22 were juveniles.

Breeding was confirmed at Hull Road Park (York), Melbourne, Naburn, Rufforth Tip, Skipwith Common (two nests found with young but outcome unknown), Scagglethorpe Lane (Poppleton), Stamford Bridge (at least 15 territories identified in and around the village), Strensall and Wheldrake Ings.

Whilst most migrants departed by mid-October, one male was still singing at Melbourne on the 27th, though not reported again after that. Possible wintering individuals were singletons reported from Haxby on 11th November, Heslington on

the 12th and Askham Bog on the 22nd. In December one was at Allerthorpe Common on the 15th, one feeding with a tit flock at Rabbit Warren Wood, Dunnington on the 17th and one at Appleton Roebuck on the 20th.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* YOC Red listed  
Rare passage migrant

None in 2020, after records in four of the past ten years, most recently 2018.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* YOC  
Very rare vagrant

None in 2020, after records in five of the past ten years, most recently 2018.

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* BBS 5/33  
Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The first was one in song at Heslington East on 6th April, then one at Wheldrake Ings on the 8th, with 16 there by the 22nd, the same day as numbers between Thornton and Walbut Bridge on Pocklington Canal reached ten. The majority of reports came from the LDV (notably Bank Island, Wheldrake Ings and various sites along the Pocklington Canal) and Heslington East. Single-digit numbers were also present at Askham Bog, Bolton Percy Ings, Cawood, Haxby (Westfield Beck), Kelfield Ings, Milford Common, Naburn, Ozendyke Ings, NDC, Riccall (Angram ponds), Ryther Ings, Poppleton (on the riverside), Towthorpe, Ulleskelf Mires and Wistow Clough. Several sites saw singletons reported on just one or two days including: Askham Bryan, Biggin, Bishopthorpe, Copmanthorpe, Escrick, Foggathorpe and Holme-upon-Spalding Moor railway line.

Food-carrying was first seen at Wheldrake Ings on 13th June, where several pairs bred, while the first fledglings were seen at Melbourne on the 15th. Breeding was also confirmed at Bolton Percy Ings, other sites along Pocklington Canal (The Grange, Thornton Lock), Stamford Bridge (NR) and Ulleskelf Mires. Five adults and one juvenile were ringed at Heslington East in 2020. During July, of eight at Melbourne on the 15th five were singing and, of ten at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th six were still singing.

After 31st August there were no more reports until one was caught and ringed at Wheldrake Ings on 18th September, with the last being two there on the 22nd and 24th.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* BBS 0/33  
Migrant breeder and passage migrant

The first to arrive were along the Pocklington Canal, with two singing in the reedbed at Church Bridge on 17th April and one at Bielby two days later. The first at Heslington East arrived on the 20th, the same day as four at Milford Common, and seven at Wheldrake Ings, with nine at the latter on the 22nd. On 7th May, 11 were singing at Cawood, and ten at Wistow Clough. In addition to these and away from the LDV, a few records also came from Askham Bog, Brighton, Crambe, Foggathorpe, Hemingbrough, Holme upon Spalding Moor, Naburn, Riccall

(Landing Lane reed bed) and SHL.

Breeding was confirmed at Heslington East (where the population seems to be growing as the reedbeds mature further), Milford Common, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne and Thornton – 21 on 7th July included 11 juveniles) and Wheldrake Ings.

Despite COVID restrictions hampering ringing efforts somewhat, numbers ringed at Heslington East were still locally significant, with 50 ringed there (including 27 juveniles), while one adult caught on 17th June turned out to have been ringed in France (see also UoYRG report on page 143). Another interesting capture was of a Spanish-ringed bird which turned up at Wheldrake Ings on 21st July. In September, after the last departed from Heslington East on the 6th, one was caught and ringed at Wheldrake Ings on the 15th and another on the 21st, which was still present to the 24th – the last sighting of the year.

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*  
*Scarce migrant breeder*

*Red listed*

A good year for the species saw records coming from 18 different sites (up from eight in 2019), including several away from the LDV. The first of the year were singletons reeling along Blackwood Lane, Selby and NDC both on 21st May, the former heard there again on the 23rd but not thereafter. Before the end of the month singletons were heard at Poppleton and Wheldrake Ings, both on the 24th, Skipwith Common on the 26th, Brighton on the 28th and NDC on the 29th. One was reeling at Askham Bog on 2nd May, and again on the 5th, when one was also reeling at East Cottingwith, but not reported again after the 7th.

In June one was reeling at Bishopthorpe Ings on the 5th and 10th, and one at Naburn also on the 10th, while in the LDV one continued to reel at Wheldrake Ings during the month, with two present there on the 9th and three on the 10th. One was at Storwood on the 14th; with three regular at Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings to the end of the month this brought the total of reeling birds to 14 present since early May. Elsewhere, one was at Acomb Ings on the 21st.

During July, one at Skipwith Common was reeling through to the 18th, but breeding was not thought to have taken place, one was at Ryther Ings on the 8th and at Wheldrake Ings, two were reeling on the 1st and one after dark on the 6th. A new bird turned up at Thornton Ellers on the 16th and a juvenile was caught and ringed at Summerfield Nursery, Poppleton on the 19th. The last of the year was one caught at Wheldrake Ings on 29th July, which had been ringed there in May.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*  
*Migrant breeder with some birds overwintering*

*BBS 26/33*

Overwintering birds were seen (many in gardens) in Acomb (male and female), Easingwold, Heslington, Seaton Ross, St Nicholas Fields, Poppleton and York (Clifton, Holgate and Rawcliffe Lane), into early March. In a garden by Rowntree Park – a female present throughout was joined by a male in late February.

Rowntree Park saw the first singing male on 18th March, while the first migrant

back to the LDV was one singing at Bank Island on the 27th, with other singing males heard at Brayton Barff, Hassacarr NR, Heslington and Fishergate (York) by the end of the month. Arrivals were widespread thereafter. Seven were back at Brayton Barff on 6th April, four singing at Bielby along Pocklington Canal on the 7th, seven singing at Fulford Golf Course on the 10th (15 by the 19th), 18 at Bolton Percy on the 11th and 13 at Thorganby on the 15th. On 1st May 25 were singing at Brayton Barff, 12 were at Allerthorpe Common on the 6th, 12 (nine singing) at Heslington East on the 9th, ten at Acaster Airfield on the 14th and 12 at Wheldrake Ings on the 23rd. Elsewhere counts were in single figures.

Males were heard singing widely and successful breeding no doubt took place at many other sites as well as at those where breeding was confirmed: Brayton Barff, Haxby, Melbourne, Thornton, Rufforth Tip, Stamford Bridge, Poppleton (Summerfield Nursery) and Wheldrake Ings. At Skipwith Common ten nests with eggs were found between the 8th and 28th May (one predated, outcome of the others unknown). Of 30 ringed by the UoYRG in 2020, 25 were 1st-year birds.

Post breeding, most counts were in single digits, mainly up to five, though large numbers were noted as passing through the LDV in September with higher counts there being 11 at Bank Island on the 22nd and 12 on the 23rd. There were no counts above two in October. November saw a female at Bank Island on the 3rd, one was caught and ringed at NDC on the 22nd and a male appeared in a garden in Rawcliffe, York, on the 25th. A male and female overwintered in Bolton Percy, as did a pair present in a Poppleton garden from mid-November. Single records also came during the period from Dringhouses, Heslington, Nether Poppleton and Rufforth Tip.

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

*Migrant breeder*

*BBS 5/33*

The first was at Nether Poppleton on 10th April, then one at Bishop Wood on the 19th, and a small flurry of arrivals on the 23rd with two at Milford Common, and singles at Murton and Skipwith Common. Singletons arrived daily thereafter to the end of the month to several other sites. By 1st May, three were singing at Brayton Barff with arrivals recorded throughout the LDV by the 3rd. Records came from around 40 sites (including sites in the LDV). Whilst mostly recorded in small numbers of between one and three birds, six were in sub-song at Allerthorpe Common on 6th May, and six were at Skipwith Common on the 13th. Fours were at Bank Island and Wheldrake Ings in May (with five at the latter on 1st June) and four also at Bishop Wood on the 16th. There were five at Milford Common on 17th June and four at SHL on 27th July.

Though singing males were evident at many sites, there was limited evidence of successful breeding apart from at Brayton Barff where 'small numbers' bred, and agitated behaviour by a pair was seen at Scagglethorpe Lane on 18th May. On 12th May two nests with five eggs in each were found at Skipwith Common – however later one was predated and the other deserted. There were sporadic reports during July, with none after the 29th, until the final sighting of the year, one at Bank Island on 11th August.

## Rare and Scarcer Birds recorded during 2020



Left to right and top to bottom

Juvenile 'Minster' Peregrine © Doug Crawford

Bearded Tit © Ben Egron-Reverseau

Red-rumped Swallow © Jono Leadley

White Wagtail © Peter Reed

Water Pipit © Jono Leadley

Hawfinch © Mark Coates

Crossbill © Mike Walton

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*

*Migrant breeder*

*BBS 3/33*

The first arrived a week earlier than in 2019, with singletons at Bank Island, Brayton Barff, Haxby and Scagglethorpe Lane (Poppleton) all on 11th April, then one at Middlethorpe Ings on the 12th and one at Brumber Hill on the 14th. Though mostly reported in ones and twos, records came from around 60 sites in total with singing males heard at many of these. Higher counts were three at Brumber Hill on 21st April (increasing to five by the 28th), three at Bolton Percy on the 24th, four at Clifton Backies on the 25th and four at Heslington Tillmire on the 26th. Three were at Melbourne on 7th May and three also at Bolton Percy Ings and at Foggathorpe, both on the 9th. There were still five at Brumber Hill in June.

The only confirmation of breeding came from Rufforth Tip where a female with a brood patch was ringed on 17th July. Two adults were ringed at Summerfield Nursery (Upper Poppleton) on 27th August. The last records of the year both came from Bank Island with one there on 31st August, then a month later the final sighting was one on the late date of 1st October.

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*

*Migrant breeder*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 25/33*

Widespread and well reported from just over 100 sites, most in single digit numbers up to six.

There was a spate of arrivals on 11th April with singletons at Heslington East, Heslington Tillmire, three different places in Poppleton, and Storwood, with daily arrivals thereafter to new sites as well as increasing numbers at many. Five were at Poppleton by the 21st, five at Ulleskelf Mires the same day, six at Rufforth Tip on the 23rd and six (five singing) were at Heslington East/Low Lane by the 26th (with 13 by 3rd May). Counts above ten included 13 along the Hagg Bridge section of Pocklington Canal on 8th May, 11 at Foggathorpe on the 9th and 11 at Storwood on the 10th. June saw 12 at Wheldrake Ings (four singing) on the 6th, while 12 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 8th included fledglings just out of the nest, as did 21 at Ulleskelf Mires the following day. Nineteen at Brumber Hill on the 22nd comprised three family parties and other calling individuals.

Singing birds were widespread during the breeding season. The first fledglings were seen in late May at Wheldrake Ings. Breeding was also confirmed at Allerthorpe Common, Brayton Barff, Bolton Percy Ings, Clifton Backies, Nether Poppleton, Pocklington Canal (Melbourne, Seavy Carr and Thornton Lock), NDC, Riccall Dam Dike, Rufforth Tip, Strensall and Ulleskelf Mires. In a 1km square study site at Riccall 24 nests were found at the side of hedges (5 were predated, 1 abandoned) - 77 chicks were ringed giving a mean brood size of 4.27 at ringing, average for the site. Since pairs may produce more than one brood per season the number of pairs was unknown. In late August 17, including many juveniles, were caught and ringed at Summerfield Nursery, Poppleton on the 27th. At Rufforth Tip, there were several nests recorded during the season and 37, mostly juveniles, ringed there on 11th September. An interesting ringing record was of AYL9225 (a juvenile) ringed on 19th August at Rufforth Tip – 16 days later and



540km further south, it had the misfortune of hitting a window in France (first foreign recovery).

After mid-September records only came from the LDV, including eight at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th, while the last was one at Bank Island on the 22nd.

**Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapilla*

YOC

*Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor*

The only sighting was of one in a tit flock in scrub near Askham Bog on 22nd November, which obligingly stayed still just long enough to be photographed by the finder (TBr).

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

BBS 3/33

Whilst most counts were in low single digits during the year (predominantly ones and twos), the only count above ten in the first half of the year was 20 at Bishop Wood on 16th May. In the second half of the year, virtually all the higher counts came from Skipwith Common with 14 on 7th November and 12 there on the 25th the maxima. Elsewhere there were eight at Redhouse Reservoir on 29th December in a mixed flock of tits, Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* and Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris*.

During the breeding season birds were observed holding territory and singing at many locations, including Allerthorpe, Milford, Skipwith, Strensall and Yearsley Commons, Askham Bryan, Bank Island, Bolton Percy, Brayton Barff, Castle Howard, Gilling, Heslington (East, village and Tillmire), Fulford (Ings and Golf Course), Haxby, Knavesmire, Melbourne, Murton, Naburn, Osbaldwick, Riccall, Poppleton and Wheldrake Ings. An adult with three juveniles was at Seavy Carr on 5th August and six at Skipwith Common on the 14th included four juveniles. A pair fledged young in conifers at Poppleton Community Railway Nursery and fledged broods were also seen at Acomb and at Rufforth Tip.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

*Common resident breeder*

BBS 31/33

Widespread and well reported throughout the year, with counts (where given) mostly in low single digits. Counts of ten or more were ten at Milford Common on 22nd January, 14 at Skipwith Common on 7th March, 12 at Melbourne on the 16th and 17 at Milford Common on the 17th. Ten were at Canal Head, Pocklington on 9th April, ten at Allerthorpe Common on 13th April (and 13 on the 20th), 11 along Fulford Golf Course on the 19th and 13 along Pocklington Canal towards Hagg Bridge on the 24th. There were also ten along Crossmoor Lane near Haxby on several dates in April and May. In May ten were at Towthorpe on the 8th, 14 at Fulford Golf Course on the 15th, 12 at Foggathorpe on the 16th (and 14 on the 25th), ten at Strensall on the 19th, 12 at Nether Poppleton on the 24th and 11 along the rail trail at Harthorpe on the 25th. 12 were at Wheldrake Ings on 11th June and 16 near Naburn Wood (BBS count) on the 14th. There were far fewer counts received after July, the highest being 13 at Ulleskelf Mires on 13th

September, 23 at Milford Common on 16th October, 13 at Allerthorpe Common on 6th November and 14 at Skipwith Common on the 7th.

Singing males were heard from February onwards and territory holding was noticeable from April. Birds were observed visiting nest sites in Fulford, Heslington and Nether Poppleton in May and June, while 12 at Strensall on 27th May included fledged young and nine at Melbourne on 3rd July included three juveniles. Breeding confirmation, with young seen at all these sites, also came from Bustardthorpe, Fulford, Heslington, Melbourne, Rufforth Tip, Skipwith Common, Stamford Bridge, Thornton Lock, Upper Poppleton, Wheldrake Ings and York (Rawcliffe Lane and Windmill Lane).

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*

*Resident breeder*

*BBS 3/33*

Widespread in areas with suitable habitat, with reports coming from almost 60 sites (up from 48 in 2019) and a few reports of birds visiting garden feeders too. The Heslington population, now consisting of several territories, was particularly well recorded, but there may be some overlap of records from sites in that general area. As expected, most reports were of one or two birds. Four were at Castle Howard on 19th January, four at Brayton Barff on 30th March and eight there on 4th April. Up to four were at Wheldrake Ings in the car park and along the riverside track during August, while a minimum of eight was at the Yorkshire Arboretum along the southern boundary wall on 4th November.

During the breeding season singing males were heard and territories noted at many sites, with confirmed evidence of breeding coming from a few; several pairs used nest boxes. Nest building was seen in Acomb Wood in late March, food-carrying was seen at Acaster Malbis on 6th May and a pair was feeding at least two young in a nest box at Clifton Park on the 10th. Food-carrying to a nest at Dunnington was also seen in spring. At least two (possibly three) pairs bred in the Heslington area, with recently fledged juveniles visiting local garden feeders regularly in June and July. Successful breeding also took place at Brayton Barff (where birds are resident all year) and a pair bred at Bishopthorpe Palace.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 2/33*

Common and widespread with reports, generally of one or two birds, coming from around 70 sites, slightly down on the c.75 of 2019. Four were at Askham Bog on 3rd February. In March three were at Castle Howard on the 8th, four at Skipwith Common on the 14th and threes in the Danesmead Wood area on the 21st, in York (site not specified) on the 27th and at Naburn Ings on the 31st. Six in the Castle Howard area on 27th June included two singing and five were there on 18th July, when one was singing. Three were at Wheldrake Ings on 17th October, four there on the 18th, and four again on 6th December. Five were at Skipwith Common on 25th November with three at the Bomb Bays there on 12th December and again on the 23rd. Also in December, four were at Beningbrough on the 24th and three at Redhouse Reservoir in a large mixed flock with tits,

Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* and Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* on the 29th.

During the breeding season, there were some reports of territory holding and males singing and breeding success noted. A pair was at a nest site at Redhouse Wood on 19th April, a pair nested in an RSPB treecreeper box on New Walk Terrace, York in April and a pair bred low in a tree alongside Fulford Golf Course fledging two young on 17th May (with the juveniles still around in June). However, a nest with three young at Skipwith Common on 10th May had been predated by the 19th. Adults were feeding young at Poppleton on 20th May, and on 1st June food-carrying was seen at Melbourne. Confirmation of breeding also came from Rufforth Tip with fledglings seen there.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

*Red listed*

*Common resident breeder and winter visitor*

*BBS 26/33*

Common and widespread, with some huge flocks in both winter periods. The early part of the year was dominated by the daily spectacular murmuration in the North Duffield/Aughton area from January to the end of March, which continued to draw crowds of both birders and non-birders alike. The birds roosted at Aughton in the willows there, numbers increasing from c.65,000 on 2nd January to c.300,000 on the 25th to 27th with birds seen coming to or leaving the roost accounting for hundreds seen around the LDV on many dates. There was still c. 280,000 on 8th February and 150,000 viewed from NDC on 2nd March with 60,000 present on the 10th and 45,000 on the 16th before dwindling to 200 on 1st April. Numbers elsewhere included at least 500 at Brumber Hill on 9th January, 400 feeding on stubble at Riccall on the 25th, and 1000 there on 26th February. 1500 were feeding with Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* at Naburn on 22nd February, while 700 on 9th March was the largest count from Bolton Percy Ings. 800 were at Dunnington Common on 17th March, 300 at Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on the 21st, a murmuration of 2500-3000 was seen at Barthorpe on the 23rd and 500 were at Crossmoor Lane near Haxby on the 28th.

Breeding was confirmed at several sites with food-carrying seen during May and fledglings seen thereafter at Acaster Malbis, Acomb, Bubwith, Fulford, Fulford Ings, Heslington, Heslington East, Melbourne, Nether Poppleton, Osbaldwick, Poppleton, Seaton Ross, Stamford Bridge, Thornton, Yapham and York (Frances Street). A feeding flock of 300 was at Heslington East on 30th May.

Post breeding a roost at Wheldrake Ings built to 380 by the 25th with 800 by 4th July but only 200 at the end of the month. 200 were at Heslington East on 15th August, with flocks of between 100 and 150 at Naburn, Ozendyke Ings and Bolton Percy Ings later in the month and similar numbers into September. 350 were along Elvington Road on 26th September. 151 northwest over Bank Island on 14th October was the first autumn movement of note, followed by 226 south during a two-hour VMW at Bolton Percy Ings on the 15th, and 391 north there the following day. Numbers built at NDC from 417 on the 19th to 5000 by the 29th. 400 were at Ellerton Ings and 4000 at Spaldington both on the 22nd. In November flocks in the hundreds were at many sites and large flocks remained at NDC with 2000 seen flying west on the 3rd (with up to 2200 present on the 21st and 22nd) while 1510

flew south at Bolton Percy Ings during another two-hour VMW on the 5th. 800 south over Bank Island on the 9th were presumed to be heading to roost, and 800 were at Brumber Hill on the 13th, with a murmuration of 1000 there at first light on the 15th and 700 present on the 21st. Also on the 15th, there was a murmuration of 2000-3000 near Spaldington, with many smaller flocks also in that area. 750 were on Acaster Airfield on the 23rd, and 700 on and off wires into fields near Riccall on the 29th. December saw 900 at Wistow Clough on the 1st, 2000 at NDC on the 9th, 1000 at Wheldrake Ings on the 13th and 2000 at Bubwith Ings on the 19th, the same day as 1200 were feeding in a field at Milford Common. On the 20th 1200 were in fields north of Biggin, and 2000 gathered at Brumber Hill before flying towards Bilbrough Top on the 26th. A roost developed at the tiny reedbed round the pond at Bilbrough Top and a murmuration grew in late December from 3500 into roost on the 27th to between 10-30,000 to the year end, inevitably drawing local birders to view it from the bridge over the A64. The 31st also saw 2000 leave Sherburn in Elmet southeast at dusk, perhaps to roost at Fairburn Ings.

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

YOC Red listed

In contrast to the single spring report last year a number of sightings occurred during the spring passage in 2020. The first was a male at Seaton Ross from the 10th to 12th April (GR). On the 17th a pair turned up in a hedgerow along the lane by Langwith Stray (DMB), remaining in the area to the 20th (DMB, RCn, GF). A female was at Brighton on 20th April (LDV Blog) and one at Bolton Percy from the 24th to the 26th (AS, JR et al).

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

*Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant*

BBS 33/33

Well reported, common and widespread throughout the area, mostly in single digit numbers with regular counts coming from several sites during the year. Counts of 20 or more in the first quarter included 20 at Aughton on 4th January, 24 at Scagglethorpe Lane on the 15th, 61 at Milford Common on the 22nd and 25 at Nether Poppleton on the 25th. In February 20 were at Kirkby Wharfe on the 6th and the monthly peak counts at Nether Poppleton and Danesmead Wood were 33 on the 28th and 37 on the 21st respectively. 31 were noted at Milford Common on 17th March and 22 at Nether Poppleton on the 22nd.

Singing males were evident from March. Food-carrying was first noted in Heslington on 31st March and on 9th April at Bolton Percy and fledged young were seen at Heslington on the 26th. Subsequently there were numerous reports of breeding across the club area including Acaster Malbis, Askham Bryan, Dunnington, Haxby, Naburn, Poppleton and Strensall. During the breeding season peak site counts included 28 at Fulford Ings on 6th April and 24 at Seaton Ross on 10th April, 35 at Fulford Golf Course on 9th May (mostly males), 35 at Westfield Wood on the 19th, 50 at Milford Common also on the 19th (including fledged young), and 20 at Danesmead Wood on the 25th. In June and July counts of over 20 continued from these sites and there were 22 at Nether Poppleton on 7th July.

August produced no significant counts.

In September numbers rose again with 26 at Milford Common on the 17th, while on the 29th, 43 at Westfield Wood, Haxby included flocks of nine and ten on tilled fields nearby. 23 were at Melbourne on 5th October, whilst NDC had 30 on the 17th and 35 on the 27th. On 1st November 25 were on Acaster Airfield, followed by a notable arrival of 40+ at Bank Island from the east on the 3rd. Forty were at Spaldington on the 4th, while Bubwith Ings held 25 on the 8th (and 30 on the 14th). Forty were on North Duffield Ings on 11th November, 20 at Menthorpe on the 22nd, 35 at Milford Common on the 24th, 30 at Seaton Ross on the 29th and 40 at Colton on the 30th. Numbers increased at Westfield Wood from 20 on 5th December to 30 on the 13th. In December, Hob Moor held 20 on the 7th, with 20 at Dringhouses on the 8th, 50 at NDC on the 11th, 20 along Crossmoor Lane near Haxby on Christmas Day and finally 30 along Menthorpe Lane on the 28th.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*

*Red listed*

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Compared with 2019, numbers in January were significantly enhanced with the peak count a flock of 540 at Church Fenton on the 14th. Other flocks of 300 to 400 were noted at Acaster Malbis, Bolton Percy, Dunnington Common, Elvington, Riccall, Thornton and Scagglethorpe Lane during January. No doubt numbers are dictated by weather conditions further east. February yielded lower numbers though 167 were at Scagglethorpe Lane on the 7th and 600 near Hessay Pond the following day. March saw 220 at Strensall, 450 were present at both Dunnington Common and Elvington on the 17th (perhaps the same flock), 400 were at Beningbrough on the 26th, 300 at Riccall Ings on the 30th and a similar number north of Haxby the following day. Numbers then reduced though Acaster Airfield held 300 on 5th April with a similar number at Escrick on the 7th when 150 were at Wheldrake Ings. The last sighting of spring was of one at Crossmoor Lane, near Haxby on 1st May.

The first returning migrants arrived with a flourish on 11th October when 167 flew northwest over Bank Island; with 500 present there on the 13th. In the next fortnight substantial flocks were noted as follows: 266 flew south at Bolton Percy Ings on the 15th, 150 were at Scagglethorpe Lane and 590 over Wistow Clough on the 17th (535 south), 300 flew west over the LDV at dusk on the 19th and 233 were counted at NDC the same day. 291 flew south over Ellerton Ings on the 20th, and 291 were at NDC on the 21st, the same day that 200 were at Bank Island. On the 22nd 758 passed south over Ellerton Ings, with 564 noted at Wistow the same day. A further 100 passed over Parliament St in York on the 29th. In addition, many smaller groups were noted widely during October and throughout the later autumn period. Notable counts in November were of 1000+ in the LDV on the 5th, flocks of 400-600 at Bolton Percy, Riccall and Kirkby Wharfe on the 8th to the 11th and 300 at Copmanthorpe on the 17th, after which flocks were more fragmented though widely noted. 1000+ were present at Bank Island on 26th November. In December 200 were feeding in a field near Fulford on the 27th, and 150 at Menthorpe Lane on the 28th with 250 there the following day.

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

*Red listed*

Redwing are generally found in smaller flocks than are Fieldfare, their larger migrant cousin, and are much more widely dispersed being found even in urban environments. In January up to 1000 were noted on several dates on farmland in the Thorganby area from mid-month. Other notable flocks in January were 250 at Scagglethorpe Lane on the 2nd (and 150 on the 23rd), 110 at Aughton Ings on the 4th, 220 at Bank Island on the 6th, 110 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 10th (100 still on the 12th), 150 at Dunnington on the 11th and 200 at Oxton on the 13th. In February and March, there were many counts of between 20 and 50, but the only counts above 100 were 153 at Scagglethorpe Lane on 7th February, 110 at Bolton Percy Ings on 2nd March with 200 there on the 9th, and 100 at Poppleton Ousebank School's playing fields on the 31st. After 85 at Brumber Hill on 5th April and a number of reports of singletons through to late April, the last was of a single at Bolton Percy Ings on 3rd May.

The return migration started with one at Bank Island on 17th September but the influx really started on 26th September when night migrating birds were heard over Clifton and 17 were noted heading west over NDC. The following day 260 were at Bank Island and 70 at Bolton Percy. Smaller flocks were seen more widely thereafter. On 11th October a large movement saw 4360 move northwest over the LDV, including 2650 over Bank Island in two hours after dawn, when there were also 110 at Bolton Percy Ings and 200 at Nether Poppleton. On 12th October 100 roosted at Wheldrake Ings in the reed beds and a further 700 arrived there on the 13th. 111 flew northwest over Bank Island on the 14th and 112 on the 17th, when 124 were at NDC. On 21st October over 1000 arrived in the LDV on an afternoon of light drizzle. VMW at Bolton Percy Ings included 594 heading northwest on the 14th, 272 south on the 15th and 380 south on the 25th and 26th. In November 220 at NDC on the 2nd and 200 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 9th were the highest counts, with smaller groups of up to 60 seen widely. 100 were at Redhouse reservoir on the 1st then 100 at Haxby, 200 at Kirkby Wharfe, 100 at SHL and 170 along Scagglethorpe Lane – all on the 11th. Brumber Hill had 300 on the 13th, with 150 at Bubwith Ings and 130 at Wheldrake Ings on the 15th. In December the only substantial groups noted were of 180 at Bolton Percy and 150 on Bolton Percy Ings on the 11th.

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

*Red listed*

*BBS 22/33*

Common and widespread throughout the area with most counts of between one and four birds. The far carrying and distinctive song of males mean that counts seldom overlook the species! The highest counts included nine at Milford Common on 26th February (and 16th October), nine along Fulford Golf Course on 19th April and 14 there on 9th May, ten at Castle Howard on 18th July (nine singing) and 12 at Wheldrake Ings on 26th July (six singing). High single digit counts also came from Bank Island, Brayton Barff, Kirkby Wharfe, Melbourne, Nether Poppleton, NDC, Thornton Lock (Pocklington Canal) and Wheldrake Ings.

The first evidence of territory holding was a singing male on 1st January. Following that there were widespread reports of singing males holding territory. Up to nine were singing at Brayton Barff on 19th February (with eight still singing there on 19th June). The first recently fledged young were seen at Bolton Percy on 22nd April. Food-carrying was noted at Brumber Hill on 23rd April, at Stamford Bridge on 30th April, and at Seaton Ross on 10th May, with recently fledged young seen at Melbourne on 14th May and at Hassacarr NR on the 30th. Four nests were noted at Skipwith Common on 18th May. Nine at Milford Common on 17th July included recently fledged young and fledglings were also noted at both Wheldrake and Harewood Whin as late as mid-September. One unusual record was of two young birds picking up plums and smashing them on the ground as if they were snails at Stamford Bridge on 2nd September.

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant*

*BBS 6/33*

Widely distributed, though generally seen singly or as a pair. Single singing males were noted at some 20 locations in January along with pairs seen elsewhere. Groups of three were recorded in the first three months at Clifton, Danesmead Wood, Kirkby Wharfe, Knavesmire and Poppleton Lane. Larger counts were six at Dunnington on 8th January, five on Milford Common on 22nd January, four on Walmgate Stray on 29th January, four on Skipwith Common on 7th March, six at Nether Poppleton on 16th April, five at Fulford Golf Course on 19th April and six at Heslington on the 30th.

On 7th May food-carrying was noted at Fulford Golf Course and ten, including two families with recently fledged young, were there on the 15th. A pair with three young was at Thorganby on the same date. A family party of four was at Naburn on 9th June and another of six at Milford Common on the 25th.

Post breeding, the year's peak count was a flock of 30+ seen flying from a tree in the hedgerow close to Copmanthorpe wood into another tree by the railway – flying across in groups of up to ten birds on 7th August. Five were at Scagglethorpe Lane on 22nd August, nine at Thornton Lock on 16th September, nine at Fulford Golf Course on 28th September, eight at Naburn the same day and six at Pocklington Canal on 28th October. A group of four was seen repeatedly on the playing fields at Poppleton Ousebank School throughout September and October. December produced six at Riccall Grange on the 2nd, six on Bolton Percy Ings on the 5th, five at Menthorpe Lane on the 9th and six at Heslington on the 27th. Singing males staking out territory at Melbourne on 27th November and at Thornton Lock on the 30th foreshadowed the next breeding season.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*

*Red listed*

*Migrant breeder and passage visitor*

*BBS 2/33*

A single at Bolton Percy on 30th April was the first returning bird, two weeks earlier than in 2019. The next arrived a week later with singles at Holme upon Spalding Moor and Wheldrake Ings on 6th May, two at Brayton Barff on the 7th and at Bolton Percy on the 8th and 9th. On the latter date a single had also

reached the north of the area at Yearsley. As May continued records of one or two birds were received from the additional sites of Brumber Hill, Cali Heath NR, Hessay, Melbourne, Skipwith and Stensall Common, whilst numbers increased to four at both Bolton Percy and Brayton Barff.

Breeding evidence was unfortunately reduced compared to last year both in respect of the number of nest sites and locations. Two pairs bred at Bolton Percy, the first in a nest box which successfully raised two broods of three, whilst the second pair reached incubation stage with a nest in ivy on an old apple tree - ultimately they were unsuccessful with the empty nest being found later on the ground. There was one family at Brayton Barff (but with the comment that numbers had sadly continued to decline at this site), an incubating pair at Hassacarr NR which later abandoned due to disturbance, and a pair on the nest at Acaster Malbis (outcome unknown). At Melbourne pairs fledged two and three young respectively and there were two pairs at Skipwith Common, although it was regarded as a poor breeding season at this site with no broods subsequently seen. At Skirpenbeck one of two adults was seen carrying food to a nearby pig shed and a family party of four was at Manor House Farm, Yearsley on 19th June. There was also one in suitable nesting habitat at Westfield House Farm, Thornton on 24th July.

Evidence of post breeding dispersal commenced in August with records away from the breeding sites including singles at Acaster Airfield on the 3rd and Melbourne on the 6th, five at Bolton Percy Ings on the 7th and two juveniles at Hessay on the 11th.



**Spotted Flycatcher** © Tom Broxup

Three remained at Bolton Percy Ings on the 17th, singles were at both Wheldrake Ings and Bank Island on the 20th and at Little Fenton on the 23rd. There were three at Clifton Park on the 24th, four at Brayton Barff on the 26th and one at Bank Island on the 29th, when there were also two at Skipwith Common. On the 31st there were two at Wheldrake Ings and one remaining on Skipwith Common.

In September migrant passage through the area continued with singles at Bank Island on



the 1st and Low Moor, Hessay on the 5th, when there was also an adult and two immatures at Wheldrake Ings. Singles were at Heslington Tillmire on the 8th, Brayton Barff on the 10th and Dam Dike, Riccall on the 12th. The last of the year were two at St Nicholas Fields on the 17th which remained until the 21st, this departure date being eight days later than in 2019.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 29/33*

Regularly encountered throughout the area with the majority of records concerning one or two birds. Larger counts of more than ten birds included 19 at Milford Common on 22nd January, with 18 there on 17th March, in April 15 at Fulford Golf Course on the 5th had increased to 21 by the 19th and 13 were at Allerthorpe Common on the 13th. Good counts continued at Fulford Golf Course during May with a monthly maximum of 19 on the 15th – most were encountered in similar locations on subsequent visits and were assumed to have been holding territories. In addition, there were 14 at Bishopthorpe on the 3rd, 12 at Allerthorpe Common on the 4th, 14 all in song at Westfield Beck/Wood, Haxby on the 5th and 12 on the 25th along the Foggathorpe to Harlthorpe rail trail.

Post breeding, with singing ceasing and the species becoming harder to detect there were no more large counts until August when there were 11 at Westfield Beck/Wood, Haxby, with 11 to 13 there through to December. In September 14 were at Ulleskelf Mires on the 13th. Peak numbers occurred in October, no doubt influenced by incoming continental autumn migrants with a maximum of 20 at Melbourne on the 5th, 34 at Milford Common on the 16th and 28 at NDC on the 17th.

Excluding singing birds or pairs apparently holding territories evidence of breeding came from a minimum of 28 sites with records of note being the earliest ever breeding attempt in a nest box in Heslington, with a chick hatching on 17th February (unfortunately it and the remaining brood of eggs were predated), a pair nest-building in an ivy-covered wall at Heslington on 20th March and a brood of four in Dringhouses, three of which were sadly predated by cats. There was also an interesting record of one in Naburn on 5th April heard mimicking an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*!

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

*YOC Red listed*

*Scarce passage migrant and casual breeder*

A female was in the car park at Wheldrake Ings on 24th April (CSR) and one at Copmanthorpe the following day (POT). The last record was of a female-type bird in an Acomb garden on 17th July (CH).

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

*YOC Red listed*

*Rare visitor*

After no records last year there was a female/immature briefly at NDC on 6th September (DMB).

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

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 1/33*

The first returning spring migrant appeared five days earlier than in 2019 with a male on Heslington Tillmire on 7th April, present again on the 10th. The next sightings did not occur until May and most seemed to relate to birds back on breeding territories with records from Yearsley on the 2nd and 9th, whilst at Strensall Common there was a singing male on the 8th, a pair checking out nest holes south of the main car park on the 9th and then a male again the following day. The only other May record was a female at Naburn on the 12th.

All subsequent records related to post breeding dispersal/passage birds commencing in July with males at Bolton Percy Ings on the 2nd, Acaster Airfield on the 16th and Seavy Carr on the 22nd. There was a good series of records in August from Bolton Percy Ings with a male on the 2nd, 7th and 8th, and at least four birds (but probably more than seven) on the 17th. There was then a juvenile male on the 29th and 30th which was joined by a female on the latter date. Elsewhere in August there was one at Wheldrake Ings on the 7th, a male at Seavy Carr on the 23rd, (with a pair there on the 26th), then two males and a juvenile at Bootham Stray, York on the 27th. In September there was a male at Heslington Tillmire on the 1st, with the last of the year, a female, at Askham Bog on the 19th.

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

*Red listed*

There was evidence of a small spring passage through the area with singles on Heslington Tillmire on 14th April and on farmland at Crossmoor Lane, Haxby on the 24th then in May ones at Selby on the 3rd and between Wheldrake and Esrcrick on the 18th.

The late summer accumulation of birds at Wheldrake Ings commenced with two there on 11th July. Observations of a single bird continued for the remainder of the month and for most of August with numbers only increasing on the 29th when eight were present but quickly reducing to three the next day. The last at this site were six on 5th September.

There was an increase in the number of late summer/autumn records received from other sites this year. In July there were singles at Heslington Tillmire on the 6th and Germany Beck, Fulford on the 13th. On the 30th there was an unprecedented fall of chats at NDC following early morning rain which included 31 of this species, nearly all moulting adults with just two or three juveniles – this fall extended to a local garden where three were also present. Remnants of this fall persisted the following day when 20 were still present. In August there were two adults and a juvenile at NDC on the 3rd with one on the 21st then a single recently- fledged juvenile at Seavy Carr, Thornton on the 23rd. Four were hawking insects south of the old mine, Riccall on the 24th and one was at Copmanthorpe on the 26th, whilst on the 31st there were four at Bank Island and two at NDC. In September there was a series of records from NDC concerning up to six birds present between the 1st and 7th, with the last of the year three there on the 8th.

**Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*

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

*BBS 0/33*

Good numbers were present during the first winter period. During January in the LDV sightings were mostly of pairs, but with up to five at NDC. Elsewhere there were two pairs in the vicinity of Riccall with another pair on Strensall Common. In February the LDV again accounted for most reports of either one or two birds, elsewhere two remained around Riccall with up to three on Strensall Common and a male appearing at Heslington Tillmire from the 26th. In March birds presumably started to move away from their wintering territories with a female at Melbourne on the 2nd the sole LDV record. Numbers built up to two pairs on Strensall Common and a pair took up residence on Heslington Tillmire with additional singles seen at Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on the 3rd and Skipwith Common on the 26th. By April most reports seemed to concern birds on breeding territories, the exception being a male at Colton Bridge on the 19th.

Strensall Common continues to be the main breeding site for this species in the area. Whilst no formal MOD survey was carried out it was estimated that four pairs were present, the same number as last year, with three pairs seen with young. The first young were observed on 22nd May with recently fledged young continuing to be seen during June. Though young were not seen in July, the last, two on 18th August, suggested at least some double brooding. At Heslington Tillmire a pair was present from early March, with incubation from at least 30th April. The fledged brood of four young appeared on 12th May. At least some of this family party remained in the area until the year end.

In the second half of the year there were no reports away from the breeding sites until 11 at NDC on 30th July, associated with an unprecedented fall of Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, with a minimum of 15 the following morning; all except one or two of these birds were recently fledged juveniles. Twelve remained at this site on 17th August with six still on the 31st. From mid-September onwards there was an influx of records, whilst some will have related to autumn passage the majority seemed to concern birds once again taking up wintering territories, with most of these across the LDV. Counts of note included 11 at NDC on 21st September and 12 across the wider Wheldrake Ings site on the 19th, whilst on 5th October there were 12 again at Wheldrake Ings roosting in front of the Tower Hide. A full survey of the reserve on the 11th resulted in a count of 27. Away from the LDV there were two regularly at Strensall Common (with five there on 27th November), a family party of four at Skipwith Common on 10th September (where up to two were present until the year end), and a pair overwintered at Acaster Airfield. In addition, there were occasional reports from elsewhere of up to two birds from Brumber Hill, Clifton Backies, Crossmoor Lane near Haxby, Naburn, Riccall Ings, the Rufforth Tip area and Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton.

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

*Summer visitor and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 0/33*

A better spring passage than in 2019 with more reports including some double figure counts. The first again appeared in March although three days later than in

the previous two years, a single at Wheldrake Ings on the 26th. A more widespread arrival commenced towards the end of the first week of April with singles at Acaster Malbis, Biggin and Bishopthorpe all on the 5th, one in Heslington on the 6th and three at Heslington Tillmire on the 7th. As the month progressed good numbers were encountered at Brumber Hill with a maximum of 15 on the 14th, 11 on the 18th and ten the next day, up to five at Heslington Tillmire and Hagg Lane, East Cottingwith and up to three in the vicinity of Poppleton. A further 16 sites had held either one or two birds by the month end. Spring passage was still evident in May albeit much reduced with singles on the 1st at Crossmoor Lane, Haxby and Heslington Tillmire and two at Osbaldwick; one remained at each of these sites the following day when there were also five at Riccall, including a female trapped in a sapling guard which was ringed and released. Singles were at Brumber Hill on the 6th, Strensall Common on the 8th, and along the River Wharfe near Ulleskelf on the 9th, when there were also two at Heslington Tillmire, then singles at NDC on the 11th and Heslington Tillmire again on both the 14th and 17th, with one also at Nether Poppleton on the latter date.

There were no more records until return passage commenced in August with one at Wheldrake Ings on the 1st and two at NDC on the 3rd, one at Heslington East on the 14th, two at Riccall on the 24th and one at Bubwith on the 25th. In September there were one or two present at NDC between the 1st and 9th with two at nearby Bubwith Ings on the 5th, one at Acaster Airfield on the 8th, two at Wheldrake Ings on both the 12th and the 13th and then the last of the year a female/immature at Bolton Percy Ings on the 20th.

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

*Red listed*  
*BBS 19/33*

Well reported throughout the year with records coming from around 90 sites. Possibly thanks to regular counting of some colonies, there were more counts of between ten and 20 than in 2019.

In January 40 were at Acaster Malbis on the 1st, 30 at Aughton Ings on the 2nd and 50 at East Cottingwith on the 2nd and 5th, with 40 present there on several dates in February and March. 30 were at Acaster Malbis on 27th January and 75 (peak monthly count) at Haxby on the 31st. Regular counts of between 30 and 37 came from the Danesmead Wood area from January to mid-March. In April 30 were at Thornton on the 15th.

Nest building started in March and confirmation of successful breeding came from Acaster Malbis, Acomb, Dringhouses, Fulford, Haxby, Melbourne, Nether Poppleton (Easthorpe Drive), Norton, Stamford Bridge, Welburn and York (Langton Road, Rawcliffe Lane, Rosedale Street and St. Mary's).

Post breeding, in addition to many counts of up to 20, 40 were at Cawood on 3rd July, 30 at Ryther on the 9th and 35 at Upper Poppleton on the 20th. On 1st August 35 were in Wheldrake village, 40 in Westfield Wood, Haxby on the 12th and 30 at Milford Common on the 30th. In September three were caught and ringed at Bank Island (a scarce species at this site). During November, 30 were at Crossmoor Lane near Haxby on the 7th, 25 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 22nd and

26 at Melbourne the same day. December saw 30 at Nether Poppleton on the 2nd, 30 at Hob Moor LNR on the 7th and a flock of 40+ arrived at the NNR Base Bank Island on the 12th, with 30 still about on the 29th, an unusual occurrence as this site normally only has Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus*.

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

*Red listed*  
*BBS 15/33*

Remaining widespread in the area, with counts (many in double figures) from approximately 80 locations, though the Bank Island colony at the NNR Base alone counted for around a quarter of all records. Easthorpe Drive (Nether Poppleton) and Crossmoor Lane, near Haxby, were also covered throughout the year. There were more counts of 25 or more than 2019, especially in the latter half of the year.

January saw some of the largest flocks: at Bank Island numbers built to 48 on the 10th (the monthly maximum), before settling to around 20 through to June (no April counts). On 4th January 40 were at Newton Mask, 60 at Thornton Ellers on the 9th, 27 at Milford Common on the 22nd and 28 at Gilling East on the 25th. In February, 42 at Hassacarr NR was the peak count, with 35 there on 28th March. Then in June 30 were counted along Bolton Lane, Yapham on the 10th and 12th.

Confirmation of breeding came from Bank Island, Bustardthorpe Allotments, Heslington, Hessay, Melbourne, Rawcliffe Meadows, Rufforth (Summerfield Nursery), Sherburn in Elmet, Stamford Bridge, Thornton, Upper Poppleton and Yapham.

Post breeding, counts of c.20 continued for the Bank Island flock which peaked at 50 during November. Elsewhere 30 were at Landing Lane, Haxby on 27th August, 35 at Crayke on the 30th and 27 at Brumber Hill on 1st October, with 33 there on the 5th. In November, 55 were along Hagg Lane at East Cottingwith on the 14th, 50 at Towthorpe Bridge on the 15th, 35 at Brumber Hill on the 21st and 20+ in hedgerows near Fordlands Road, Fulford on the 22nd, the same day as 30 at Menthorpe. A flock of 30 at Wistow Clough on the 26th increased to at least 100 on 1st December, the peak count for the year. The last significant flock was 40 at Menthorpe on 28th December.

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*  
*Common resident breeder*

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 21/33*

Common and widespread, this species was again well reported throughout the year, with counts mostly of one to four birds. Double figure counts came from Milford Common with 12 on 22nd January and again on 17th March, Nether Poppleton with 23 on 23rd February (peak count for the year), and between ten and 12 there on several other dates to June, Danesmead Wood with ten on 7th March and Towthorpe with ten on 15th April. There were no double figure counts after June.

Males were in song from mid-February onwards, while several at Fulford Ings on 24th March included two displaying. Food-carrying was first noted at Bolton Percy on 8th April and young being fed at Acomb on the 22nd. Breeding was also confirmed at Acaster Malbis, Bank Island, Copmanthorpe, Heslington East,

Melbourne, Osbaldwick, Rufforth Tip, Seaton Ross, Skipwith Common (five nests, though outcome unknown), Stamford Bridge, Thornton, Ulleskelf Mires, Upper Poppleton and York (Frances Street).

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

*Red listed*  
*BBS 2/33*

The first of the year was one in a field near Naburn on 6th April, followed by one at Brumber Hill on the 7th and one west over Heslington East on the 8th when four were in a field with Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* at Naburn and daily arrivals to the area thereafter. Numbers increased to 12 at Naburn by the 13th and 20 on the 17th, while 21 were on a recently sown potato field near Riccall on the 15th (then 17 on the 16th and 14 on the 20th). There were 12 at Wheldrake Ings on the 22nd and up to 40 in the LDV on the 23rd, with large numbers noted throughout the valley on the 29th. Reports of smaller numbers, mostly between one and five birds, came from many other sites by the end of the month.

Nest building was first noticed at Clifton on 25th April and other pairs were evident by the first week in May, while in the LDV it was noted that the numbers were some of the best for a decade. However, confirmation of breeding was sparse. Singing males were also heard in June and at least two nests were seen at Biggin on the 19th. A family party of four including two juveniles was seen on farmland east of Naburn on 10th July.

VMW at Ozendyke recorded 18 flying south and five north between 2nd August and 18th September. On 23rd July ten roosted at Wheldrake Ings, the roost increasing to 40+ on 4th August – with numbers fluctuating thereafter between 40 and 60, with 70 present on the 25th. There were still 38 at the roost on 2nd September. On the 5th, a noticeable movement brought counts of 20+ on the Low Grounds, ten at Bank Island, ten at Ellerton Landing, 15 at Bubwith Ings and 30 at Thornton Ellers, with 150+ roosting at Wheldrake at dusk, and 65 again at roost on the 7th. Only small numbers were seen after that, with four birds south over Bank Island on the 29th the last of the year.

**Blue-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla flava flava*  
*Very rare vagrant*

YOC

One was seen near Skipwith Common on 15th April, the first since 2017.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*  
*Resident breeder and winter visitor*

*Red listed*  
*BBS 0/33*

As in previous years reports of mainly singletons or pairs came from around 59 locations in areas of suitable habitat (cf. 40 in 2019), with some pairs present all year, notably at Bank Island WTW and Naburn Lock. Five were at the WTW at Rufforth Tip on 22nd January.

Confirmation of breeding came from several sites: Food-carrying at Naburn Lock and Ings was first noted on 3rd May, and on the 16th an adult was feeding two fledged young at the Lock. A pair was visiting a nest site along the River Wharfe near Ulleskelf on the 4th, while a pair was taking food into a hole in the

WTW wall at Strensall Common on the 9th, as was a pair at Acaster Malbis on the 12th. A fledged juvenile was under the viaduct at Stamford Bridge on the 31st. Two juveniles were with an adult male on 23rd June at Dunnington.

Counts above two in the autumn were four at SHL on 28th July, three at Bank Island during September and again on 7th October and six at Acaster Malbis on 14th October (peak count for the year). VMW at Bolton Percy Ings saw four fly south, two north and one northwest between 28th August and 25th October.

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

*Common resident breeder*

*BBS 12/33*

Whilst well reported during the year, most sightings were of between one and five birds, with a few large flocks and some passage noted in the autumn. In January, 39 were at Barby on a sheep-grazed root crop on the 3rd, increasing to 188 on the 7th, then 100 on the 12th. On the 14th 28 were feeding in a field at Church Fenton and 20 at Cawton on the 21st, while 24 were along Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on the 23rd, the same day as 199 at Fossgate, York – the only report of the city centre roost in this period. In February, the Barby flock reduced to 70 on the 3rd as the field dried out, 60 were at Monks Cross on the 10th and 25 at Wheldrake Ings on the 19th.

During the breeding season small numbers (mostly one to three birds) were seen at many sites. Ten were in a field by Naburn on 6th April, 30 feeding on a recently cultivated potato field near Riccall on the 17th and ten at Towthorpe on the 20th and 25th. Food-carrying was seen at various sites in early May, and an adult was feeding a juvenile at Naburn Lock on the 16th. Adults with recently fledged young were also seen at Bank Island, Bolton Lane near Yapham (a pair fledged four young having nested in a sparrow box), Fulford Golf Course, Gilling, Heslington, Heslington East, Nether Poppleton, Scagglethorpe Lane, SHL and Wheldrake Ings.

In mid-June 15 roosted in the reedbed at Wheldrake Ings on the 17th, increasing to 25 by the month end and 60+ in mid-July. Numbers also built up elsewhere in August, 32 were at Heslington East on the 14th, 16 at Milford Common on the 16th and 25 on Fulford Golf Course on the 29th. In September passage birds included five flying south and seven north during a VMW at Bolton Percy Ings on the 20th and 15 south on the 29th. Small numbers passed over Bank Island during the month and into October when nine flew west on the 5th. Also on the 5th, 100 were seen flying towards Foss Island in York at dusk to roost, (and again on 16th November). On 11th October 28 were on harvested carrots at Riccall Grange, and 21 (including juveniles) at Acaster Airfield on the 24th. Insects on a field of abattoir waste at Riccall, south of Skipwith Common, attracted large numbers of birds with a feeding flock there building from 35 on 25th October to 85 on 20th November and 192 on the 28th, peaking at 202 on 14th December, with 50 still present on the 29th. Also in December, 25 roosted at Milford Common on the 6th, while 89 gathered at Hull Road Park on the 23rd.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba*  
*Scarce spring passage migrant*

The first was one photographed in a garden in Strensall on the remarkably early date of 25th February (PeR). A singleton was on Melbourne Ings on 18th March, and two there on the 19th in with ten Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba* (NC). In April, one was at Heslington East on the 7th and 18th (DMB), a male was feeding by Seavy Carr and singing from the boundary fence on the 12th (NCa) and four were on farmland near Skipwith Common on the 15th and 17th (DT). One was in a field by Colton railway bridge on the 19th (JLe) and, on the 21st, one turned up in a garden in Heslington (JL). In May singletons were at Acaster Airfield (JLe) and Heslington East (DMB) on the 12th and one on the new scrapes at Bank Island on the 14th (LDV Blog).

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*

*Resident and migrant breeder and passage migrant*

*Amber listed*

*BBS 1/33*

Well reported from areas with suitable habitat, mostly in small numbers, with some large flocks, though spring passage was under-reported. However as in 2019 substantial numbers were seen on passage in the autumn.

In January, a flock of 40 was feeding in wet grass at Riccall on the 20th and 30 were along Scagglethorpe Lane on the 25th. Fifty were near Foss Bridge, Poppleton on 8th February, with the Riccall flock still present on the 20th, while in March 30 were at Brumber Hill on the 9th and 38 there on 7th April. Near Riccall, 20 were feeding on a recently sown potato field on 17th April.

The first song flights were seen at Heslington Tillmire on 9th March with singing and displaying birds seen at many more sites thereafter. Food-carrying was seen at Brighton, Naburn and Wheldrake Ings during the breeding season. Seven fledged young were among a group of 12 at Melbourne on 15th July, while 21 there on the 21st included 11 juveniles from up to six different broods. Two territories were estimated at Strensall Common, after none were recorded there in 2019 (no MOD survey in 2020).

Autumn passage was evident from late August, numbers building from 15 at Bolton Percy Ings on the 18th, to 22 on the 29th and a further eight seen flying south during a VMW that day followed by 53 south on the 30th. Further VMW there between the 1st and 20th September saw 566 going south, with a peak of 308 on the 11th. At NDC the first southerly movement was 15 over on 1st September. In the LDV 150 went south on the 5th (including 135 over Bank Island), and 200 on the 6th, the same day 100 passed over Brumber Hill. 200+ moved through NDC on the 7th and a further 200 on the 8th, while a flock of 250 was present there at dusk on the 10th, with 50 also at Wheldrake Ings at dusk. At Bank Island 55 flew south on the 12th, and 141 went over on the morning of the 15th. A large movement saw 160 fly south over Brumber Hill on the 19th, with many more noted as being present in surrounding hedgerows and fields. 200+ flew south over NDC the same day, followed by 300+ on the 21st and 500 on the 23rd. Sixty were at Milford Common on the 22nd. After that, just small numbers were seen passing over.



Second winter counts included 30 at Heslington East on 8th November, then in December 20 were on a turnip field near Riccall, 30 on stubble at Riccall Ings on the 27th, 40 along Long Lane, Heslington on the 30th and 40 at Copmanthorpe on the 31st.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*

*Red listed*

*Migrant breeder though numbers have recently declined*

*BBS 1/33*

There were more reports of birds at sites other than the area's main commons (and usual strongholds) in 2020, and fewer singing males heard at both Yearsley and Skipwith. As with some other localised species, perhaps a reflection of fewer observers being able to visit these sites with regularity during lockdowns.

The first returning bird to Strensall Common was one singing on 15th April, increasing to five there on the 22nd. The first at Skipwith turned up on the 23rd with three there by mid-May. At Yearsley the first sighting was 2nd May. Elsewhere, on 7th May one was at Melbourne, one at Bolton Percy Ings on the 13th and 14th, then two on the 15th, and one at Naburn on the 16th. Thereafter, most reports came from Strensall Common; in May it was estimated that there were eight territories there (cf. 11 in 2019 and seven in 2018). One was singing in Slingsby Banks Wood on 21<sup>st</sup> June, there were two singing males at Yearsley Moor on the 25th and one holding territory at Castle Howard on the 27th. The only sighting at Skipwith Common after May was of two on 30th June, the same day as the last report from Strensall Common. On 11th July one was singing at Bank Wood, near Scackleton and one singing near Yearsley the same day. One was flying around calling at Milford Common on 18th August before flying south on the 19th, while the last of the year was one caught and ringed at Bank Island on 1st September.

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta*

*YOC Amber listed*

*Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant*

The first for the area since 2017 saw three summer-plumaged birds turn up at Thornton Ings on 13th March (NC) which were seen again on the 14th (JLe, DMB, AF, NC). All three were present again on the 15th with a further two birds on Seavy Carr (CSR). Three remained at Thornton Ings between the 16th and 18th, then two from the 19th to the 23rd, with one there on the 24th (NC et al).

**Rock Pipit** *Anthus petrosus*

*YOC*

*Scarce, mainly winter, visitor*

One seen at Bank Island on 21st October (AF) was the only confirmed sighting of the year.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

*Common resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

*BBS 29/33*

Widespread and well reported through the year, with counts mostly up to ten however there were fewer large flocks seen than in 2019. Despite many records, very few counts were given from August to October.

In the early part of the year, up to 350 at Thorganby on 20th January was the only three-digit count, a flock of 80 was at Bielby on 22nd February, while in March 20 were at the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 13th and 20 along Snake Lane in SE75 on the 26th. In April counts of 20-25 came from Fulford Golf Course, Knapton, Meltonby, Snake Lane, Thornton and Youlthorpe.

Males were singing from mid-February, with nest building first seen in March. At Skipwith Common broods of two and five were ringed on 4th May; a further 5 nests were found from the 8th to 14th May from which two broods fledged, with the outcome of the others unknown. A fledgling was ringed at the University of York on the 24th. A BBS visit near Naburn had 17 singing on 14th June, while an adult was feeding a juvenile at Bolton Percy on the 22nd. In July, 17 at Laytham Lane on the 1st included juveniles, as did six at Thornton on the 17th. Fledglings were also seen at Rufforth Tip, Stamford Bridge and Upper Poppleton.

Post breeding 31 were at Milford Common on 19th August, 22 were at Ulleskelf Mires on the 13th and a loose flock of 30 on a ploughed field adjacent to Fulford Golf Course on the 28th. During October, 15 were at NDC on the 19th, 16 at Ellerton Ings on the 20th, 12 flew SSW over Acklam on the 22nd and 30 were at East Cottingwith on the 24th. The highest counts in November were 35 at Milford Common on the 24th (with 21 there on 22nd December) and 30 at Wistow on the 26th. In December a flock of 100 was at Copmanthorpe on the 8th and 9th, while counts of 20 came from Allerthorpe Common, Beningbrough, Menthorpe Lane and Strensall Common.

### **Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla*

#### *Winter visitor and passage migrant*

A poor year, with no counts above four received. In January singletons were seen on Scagglethorpe Lane, Poppleton on the 2nd, Skipwith Common on the 5th, and NDC on the 8th. In February, one was in a garden in Elvington on the 4th, two in with a flock of Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs* at Bielby on the 21st and one at Skipwith Common on the 29th, which was the last sighting until October.

In contrast to 2019 there were more reports in late autumn and the second winter period. VMW saw one fly south over Bolton Percy Ings on 13th October, two south there on the 14th, then one north on the 15th. Also on the 15th one turned up on a garden feeder in Walmgate, York. After four at Milford Common on the 16th, there was a trickle of reports to the end of the month of one to three birds at or flying over NDC, Bank Island, Acklam, Wistow, Wheldrake Ings, Strensall Common and Ulleskelf Mires. Sightings in November saw four at Bank Island on the 8th, the same day as singletons at Bubwith Ings and NDC; the NDC bird remained on the 9th, and one was in the car park there on the 17th. Four were at Heslington East on the 11th, singletons at the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 20th and Seaton Ross on the 21st, then three at Colton on the 30th. The only December sightings were of a female at Copmanthorpe on the 8th and 9th and a male at Melbourne on the 9th.

**Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

YOC Red listed

*Rare winter visitor, with a recent increase in wintering numbers*

Most records again came from the Yorkshire Arboretum and Castle Howard. One was at Castle Howard on 5th January, with the arrival of a flock of 15 at the Yorkshire Arboretum on 6th March the next record. This flock remained in the area over the next fortnight increasing to a peak count of 35 on the 8th, and up to 32 until at least the 15th. Numbers decreased rapidly thereafter to 14 on the 17th, one on the 19th and two on the 21st – the last report until the autumn.

Two north over Newburgh Priory on 24th September were the first of autumn. The next were two at Gilling East on 5th October and a singleton flew southeast over Wheldrake Ings the following day. One was at Newburgh Priory on the 11th and one at the Yorkshire Arboretum on the 22nd, with two at Gilling again on the 30th, where a small flock was wintering around the Castle – mostly round yew trees. At the Yorkshire Arboretum up to nine were present in the autumn, though the hornbeam seed supply (a poor year) was noted as dwindling rapidly. The last report of the year was of two north over Newburgh Priory on 12th December.

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Amber listed

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

BBS 9/33

Well reported throughout the year, from around 85 sites (up from c.70 in 2019), most counts again being of one to five birds.

In January nine were at Milford Common on the 2nd, ten in Danesmead Wood and along the River Ouse on the 13th and eight along Scagglethorpe Lane on the 14th, 12 were at Wheldrake Ings on 18th, ten at Bank Island (including eight males) on the 25th increasing to 12 on the 29th. In February the highest count at Melbourne was 12, and nine there in March. Also in March, 12 were at Scagglethorpe Lane on the 3rd and ten at Milford Common on the 17th.

During the breeding season many pairs were evident. Two were visiting a nest site at Bolton Percy on 22nd April, a nest with five eggs was found at Skipwith Common (outcome unknown) and a pair was nest building at Strensall on 19th May. The first fledgling was seen in Heslington on 7th June. Successful breeding was also confirmed at Bolton Percy Ings (two adults and seven juveniles on 9th August), Brayton Barff, Clifton Park, Melbourne, Rawcliffe Lane (York), Riccall Ings, Rufforth Tip, Ulleskelf Mires and Wheldrake Ings.

Post breeding, numbers at Wheldrake Ings increased during August, peaking at 15 on the 31st, with 13 there early in September and ten to the end of the month, but thereafter no more than seven to the end of the year. Elsewhere eight were at SHL on 13th August, and eight at Milford Common on the 19th with nine there on 16th October. Fourteen were at Bank Island on 13th September while nine (one male and eight females/juveniles) were at Riccall Ings on the 28th. In November eight were along Scagglethorpe Lane on the 5th and at Melbourne on the 30th. In December eight were at Brayton Barff on the 5th, nine again at Milford Common on the 22nd, eight along Menthorpe Lane on the 28th and 15 at the Bank Island feeding station on the 29th.

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrina*

YOC

*Very rare visitor*

An immature was unexpectedly caught and ringed at the NNR base garden on the morning of 29th September (CSR, NCa). This was the first record for the reserve and the YOC recording area. Fortunately, several local birders managed to arrive in time to see the bird before its release. It was then seen again briefly in the afternoon in the hedgerow which runs towards the hides at Bank Island. See also account on page 139.

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

BBS 10/33

Benefiting from the focus on enforced garden and local birding this species was widely and very well reported during the year from around 100 sites (cf. 70 in 2019). Whilst most counts were of between one and six birds, encouragingly there were several substantial flocks noted compared with just two counts over ten last year. On 13th March 20 were at the Yorkshire Arboretum, with 15 there on the 21st. Ten at Nether Poppleton on the 22nd included singing males and a flock of ten at Crossmoor Lane near Haxby on 29th March remained there until at least 13th April, dropping to six on the 18th.

During the breeding season, singing and displaying males and pairs were widespread from late February. Adults with fledglings were seen at Bank Island, Melbourne, Rawcliffe Lane (York), Rufforth Tip, Seaton Ross, Stamford Bridge, Ulleskelf Mires and the University of York. Twelve along Scagglethorpe Lane on 22nd August included juveniles. A pair of adults with a juvenile also visited garden feeders in Fulford in November

Post breeding ten were at Acaster Malbis on 17th September. Five flew northwest at Bank Island on 11th October and a VMW at Wistow Clough on the 17th October saw 11 fly south in two hours. On the 22nd 60+ were in trees by the pumping station at Wistow Clough, with 40 still present on the 28th, then increasing again to 80 on 13th November (and the 26th). Also in November, there were 12 at Bank Island on the 22nd and 13 at Thornton Lock (Pocklington Canal) on the 23rd. During December ten were at Clifton Ings on the 2nd, while 76 gathered in trees south of the reed bed at Thornton Lock before flying northeast in various groups on the 5th. On the 9th 12 were at Hassacarr NR and ten at Melbourne on the 22nd, with 13 along Long Lane, Heslington on the 30th.

**Twite** *Linaria flavirostris*YOC *Red listed**Rare winter visitor*

None in 2020, after records in three of the past ten years, most recently 2018.

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

BBS 17/33

Well reported from areas with suitable habitat, apart from February (only three counts received). Flocks of 50 or more in the first winter period included 68 at Kirkby Wharfe on 15th January, 80 at Melbourne on the 23rd and 60 at Milford

Common on the 24th. The only flock noted in February was one of 44 in a field north of Riccall. On 15th March 50 were at Beningbrough, 50 at Barmby Moor on the 24th and 50 at Heslington Tillmire on the 25th and 26th. Also on the 26th, a large flock of at least 100 was at Laytham Lane in SE73 (with 80 still there on 3rd April), while 40 were at Seaton Ross and 42 at Westfield House Farm, Thornton on the 27th. At Dunnington Common 44 were feeding on stubble on 7th April. There were also many smaller flocks around in late March and early April, with 26 seen coming into roost by Fulford Golf Course on the 9th.

Pairs and singing males were noted from the end of March, with nest building seen at Seaton Ross on 12th April and at Melbourne on the 15th. On 5th May 50+ were at Thornton Ellers, with numbers of breeding birds in the LDV noted as being above average. At Skipwith Common, of five nests found on the 8th broods fledged successfully from two. The first fledged young were reported from Heslington Tillmire on 15th May, with successful breeding also noted at Bank Island, Kirkby Wharfe, Melbourne, Milford Common, Rufforth Tip, Strensall Common, Thornton Lock and Westfield House Farm during the summer.

Post breeding, 40 were at Low Moor, Hessay on 5th September, 37 at Brumber Hill on the 6th and 15 flew south at Bolton Percy Ings during a VMW on the 11th. There were 40 at Milford Common on the 22nd and 120 at Bubwith Bridge on the 26th. In October, 32 flew south at Bolton Percy Ings on the 1st, the same day as 50 were at Copmanthorpe, 150 were at Acaster Airfield on the 6th, 50 at SHL on the 8th and 150 feeding on a stubble field near Riccall on the 12th. 100 were at Milford Common on the 16th, and 42 flew SSW over Acklam on the 22nd. In mid-November the Acaster Airfield flock numbered 120, 50 were at Heslington East on the 20th and 110 at Wistow Clough on the 26th. During December there were flocks of up to 50 reported from several sites. Up to 80 were in the roost at Bank Island during the month and 75 in the Bubwith Ings area on the 29th.

**Common (Mealy) Redpoll** *Acanthis flammea* YOC Amber listed  
*Scarce winter visitor*

After somewhat of a bumper year in 2019, it was disappointing that there was only one report in 2020, of a single bird in with a flock of Linnets *Linaria cannabina* at Melbourne on 23rd January (NC).

**Lesser Redpoll** *Acanthis cabaret* Red listed  
*Passage and winter visitor; occasional breeder*

In complete contrast to 2019, there were very few records from the first winter period, with 20 at Allerthorpe Common on 5th January the only count above six, though 'flocks' (no counts given) were noted during the month at Brayton Barff. After four at Strensall Common and two at Milford Common, both on 17th March, there were only two reports until September. One was seen at Castle Howard on 27th June during a Turtle Dove Survey visit, the first summer sighting for four years, and one flew west over Sherburn in Elmet on 1st August.

The autumn and second winter periods were then notable for both the number

of sightings received and the spread of records (38 different sites), counts ranging from ones and twos to flocks of up to 50 and a few flocks of over 100 birds. The first returning bird was one caught and ringed at Wheldrake Ings on 1st September, then three at Bank Island on the 2nd, seven at Wheldrake Ings on the 5th with several over NDC on the 6th and small numbers overhead daily after that. 18 flew south at Bank Island on the 8th and a trickle of birds was seen moving south over Bolton Percy Ings during VMW between the 15th and 20th. The first substantial flock was of 120 at Skipwith Common on the 11th with 200 there on the 23rd though the flock often split into smaller groups before re-joining. 93 birds were ringed during the autumn. Since there were no recaptures it became clear that although the overall number on the Common remained fairly constant there was a steady turnover of birds (DT). One of the ringed birds was re-trapped at Sandwich Bay, Kent 26 days later – a distance of 328 km. The monthly maximum there in October was 140 on the 2nd. On 21st October 200 were at Melbourne with 70 at Wheldrake Ings the same day, while on the 22nd, 46 flew south/southwest over Acklam and 50+ were at Allerthorpe Common. There were 70 at Strensall Common on the 28th. In November, ringing at Heslington East saw more captures of adult birds than juveniles, while 85 at Skipwith Common on the 7th was the highest count, with flocks elsewhere numbering up to 50. During December the Skipwith Common flock reached 130 on the 22nd and 73 were at Redhouse Reservoir on the 29th, while a huge very mobile flock of up to 250 birds which arrived at Fulford Golf Course on the 26th remained feeding on silver birch to the end of the year.

### **Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra*

#### *Casual breeder and passage migrant*

A much better year than 2019, but in contrast most sightings came in the second half of the year. In January 11 were at Allerthorpe Common on the 5th, and a flock of 12 was feeding in spruce at Yearsley Moor on the 28th. Seven at Skipwith Common on 29th February were the last until the end of May when two were at Yearsley Common on the 25th. In June there was at least one at Allerthorpe Common on the 23rd, one flew over the vicarage in Heslington on the 25th, five flew south over Skipwith Common on the 27th, where small numbers were then present to the end of the year (with the maximum seven on 21st November), and one was at Strensall Common on the 30th.

In the second part of the year reports of low single-digit numbers flying over came from around 20 sites including Bolton Percy Ings, Hemingbrough and York. The first were four over Bank Island on 3rd July, while higher counts included a flock of 20 north low over Norton on the 11th, a flock of eight over Haxby on the 23rd and seven over Yearsley Moor on the 24th. Six were at Castle Howard on the 19th. During August and September, seven at Sutton Wood was the monthly maximum. In October, ten flew over Bank Island on the 4th (six east and four south), there were ten at Sutton Wood on the 9th and six over Elvington on the 10th. On the 22nd, 40+ were at Allerthorpe Common in several flocks, the same day as six at the Yorkshire Arboretum, with nine at the latter site in late November.

Higher counts in November were 12 east over Bank Island/Wheldrake Ings on the 15th and 12 in a scots pine wood at Seaton Ross on the 21st and 22nd. The only December record was of seven feeding on ash keys at Escrick on the 28th.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

*BBS 27/33*

Well reported, with counts both of small numbers – particularly from gardens – and flocks. Flocks in the first winter period and spring were somewhat smaller than in 2019. Larger counts included 44 at Heslington on 8th January, with a pre-roost flock there peaking at 50 on 28th February. On 17th January 48 were at Melbourne and 54 near Danesmead Wood on 2nd February. During March the highest counts were 35 at Thornton Lock on the 2nd and 30 at Crossmoor Lane, near Haxby on the 29th. In April, 23 were at Milford Common on the 23rd.

Singing males were heard widely from early April and breeding was confirmed at Bolton Percy, Dunnington, Fulford Golf Course, Heslington East, Heslington Tillmire, Melbourne, Seaton Ross, Stamford Bridge, Thornton Lock (Pocklington Canal), Upper Poppleton, Ulleskelf Mires, Welburn, Wheldrake Ings, and York (as last year, there were many reports of fledglings in gardens around the city and suburbs).

Post breeding, as flocks built up again, 40 at Melbourne on the 7th included many juveniles; 66 were at Milford Common on the 17th and 50 at Cawood on the 19th. In August a flock of 150 was feeding on seed heads at Heslington East on the 15th, 100 were at Brumber Hill on the 21st, and a flock of 80 on Naburn Ings on the 26th. During September flocks included 83 birds in two flocks at Brumber Hill on the 6th, 100 at Malton on the 13th, the same day as 170 at Ulleskelf Mires, with counts of 60 coming from Melbourne, Wheldrake Ings and Wistow Clough in following days. By the 25th 150 were at Wheldrake Ings. On the 27th 27 moved northwest over Bank Island, while 100 were there on 7th October. Also in October, 60 were at Brayton Barff and 60 still at Wistow Clough, with 50 there on 13th November. 50 were at Heslington East on the 21st and 50 at Milford Common on the 24th. In December, 40 at Acomb Wood LNR on the 10th and 40 at Bank Island on the 13th were the highest counts.

**Siskin** *Spinus spinus*

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

*BBS 1/33*

The largest flocks of the first winter period all came in January with 80 at Yearsley Moor on the 1st, 50 at Thornton on the 4th, 50 at Allerthorpe Common on the 5th, a well reported flock at Melbourne peaked at 100 on the 6th and 40 were at Askham Bog on the 30th. Twenty were at Strensall Common on the 7th and 17th March, otherwise counts during the period were of smaller flocks and individuals from these and a further 25 sites.

There were no records at all in April and few in May and June – mainly of one or two visiting garden feeders. Apart from adults, and later on juveniles, visiting the same Stamford Bridge garden as in previous years and juveniles seen at Strensall Common in late July, there was little confirmation of breeding, but this could also

have been because visits to suitable sites were restricted at the time.

In contrast to 2019, there were numerous reports in the second half of the year many pertaining to a flock at Melbourne which remained there for months. Passage in late June saw 57 fly south over Skipwith Common in small groups on the 27th, as well as there being other small groups about the Common, and flocks were also seen heading over Heslington. In July, a mixed flock of 100 Siskin and Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* fed on alder at Brayton Barff during the month. There were 40 at Bolton Percy on 1st July and 18 at Naburn on the 3rd, while 17 at Skipwith Common on the 4th mostly comprised juveniles. By far the largest count was 200 at Strensall Common on the 10th, with smaller numbers, mostly at the area's commons, arriving/moving through during the month. During August and into September small numbers were seen moving south. By 4th September 78 were in a flock at Melbourne feeding in alders, increasing to 140 by the 21st, up to 40 were at Skipwith Common and 32 at Milford Common on the 22nd. A flock of 80 was at Wheldrake Ings on 16th October and 50 were at SHL on the 27th, the same day the Melbourne flock reached 195 – with 100 to 120 thereafter to the end of the year. Other sizeable flocks were 55 at Milford Common on 24th November and 40 there on 22nd December.

**Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder*

*BBS 2/33*

Early in the year, monthly maxima at the traditional roost at Church Bridge, Melbourne were 111 in both January and February, with 89 there on 1st March. On 26th January flocks of 90 at East Cottingwith, 60 at Thornton Ellers, 47 at Menthorpe Lane and 11 at Aughton, saw potentially over 300 birds present in the LDV. During March, 53 were in the Thornton area. There were a few reports away from the LDV – these included three at Yapham Mill and two at Ulleskelf Mires. In April, 17 were on wires over a field at Melbourne on the 2nd, ten were at Barmby Moor on the 4th, 12 feeding in a field at Westfield House Farm, Thornton on the 14th and ten at Menthorpe Lane on the 16th.

A few males began singing in mid-February, with more by mid-March and then many through the spring and summer months in areas of suitable habitat. Up to 33 singing males were in the LDV in June as they moved onto territories.

After July, the only reports before October were of one at Ellerton Landing on 11th August and one at Wistow Clough on 18th September. Four were seen flying north during a VMW on 4th October, then singletons appeared at NDC on the 17th, Riccall on the 21st and Ellerton on the 22nd. Fifty were at Hagg Lane, East Cottingwith on the 24th, while seven there was the highest count received in November. The first back at the Melbourne roost were 12 on 5th December. Later in the month six were at North Milford on the 20th and a flock of 60 was feeding along Hagg Lane on the 28th, the same day as nine along Laytham Lane.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*

*Red listed*

*Resident breeder, passage and winter visitor*

*BBS 25/33*

Flocks of 20 or more in the first winter period and early spring were 23 at East



Cottingwith on 1st January, 30+ at Newton Mask on the 4th, 30 at Allerthorpe Common on the 5th and 36 at Landing Lane, Riccall on the 19th. In February 40 were at Kelfield on the 11th and 52 feeding on stubble in a field near Riccall on the 17th. In March, there were 20 at both Meltonby and Snake Lane (SE75) on the 22nd (and the 26th), while 22 were at game feeders at Riccall Grange on the 31st.

Singing males were heard widely from the beginning of March in areas of suitable habitat. Higher counts during April included 18 at Brumber Hill and 20 at Snake Lane on the 14th, 12 at Knapton – of which at least eight were males – and 20 at Youlthorpe on the 17th, and 22 south of Fulford on the 22nd. During May, counts of ten came from Allerthorpe Common, Bishop Wilton, Gowthorpe, Thornton, Snake Lane and Youlthorpe, while eight were singing along Moor Lane in Naburn on the 31st. Confirmation of breeding success was limited: fledged young were seen at Thornton in early August, with fledglings also seen at Ulleskelf Mires and at Rufforth Tip. At Riccall Grange, 35 nests were found at the side of hedges in a 1 km square study site. Of these, 11 were predated; two abandoned and two destroyed by agricultural activities. 58 chicks were ringed at the successful nests giving a mean brood size of 2.9 at ringing (above average for the site).

Post breeding 16 were between Spaldington and Foggathorpe on 18th October. During November 14 were feeding in cover crop at Riccall on the 2nd, 20 were near game feeders at Riccall Grange on the 9th, 20 at Brumber Hill on the 21st and 27 at Colton on the 26th. Twenty at East Cottingwith and 30 at Menthorpe Lane on the 28th were the highest counts in December, with counts of between ten and 15 also coming from Acaster Airfield, Melbourne, Rufforth Tip, Towthorpe and Ulleskelf Mires.

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

*Amber listed*  
*BBS 10/33*

Though widely reported in small numbers from many sites, notably in the LDV, up to 100 roosting in the reedbed at Church Bridge, Melbourne on 24th January, and 30 at Strensall Common on 19th February were the only significant counts in the first winter period.

The first singing males were reported at the end of February and many males singing from around 30 sites with suitable habitat during the breeding season. In the LDV, 11 out of 19 were singing at Wheldrake on 22nd May, increasing to 31 there on 13th June, with 12 singing out of 22 counted the following day. There were still 12 singing there on 4th July – there were also numerous birds at sites along the Pocklington Canal and several singing at Bank Island. Of 12 at Heslington East on 20th May, nine were singing. Though there was no formal MOD survey at Strensall Common, ten territories were counted there, ten were at Acaster Malbis on 14th June and six singing at Clifton Ings on the 18th. Confirmation of breeding came from Acaster Malbis, Heslington East, Heslington Tillmire, Rufforth Tip (several nests, and 15 on 11th September included lots of juveniles), Pocklington Canal (Melbourne and Thornton Lock), Skipwith Common, Stamford Bridge, Ulleskelf Mires and Wheldrake Ings. At the Riccall Grange 1km

square study site six nests were found: from four successful nests ten chicks were ringed with a mean brood size of 2.5, lower than average

Post breeding 14 roosted at Wheldrake Ings on 12th August – there were counts of up to 17 there during September and into October. Thirty came into the roost on 21st October, however there was no repeat of the huge roost seen there in 2019. Thirty were at Thornton Lock on 5th October and 11 at Milford Common on the 16th and at NDC on the 19th, while 56 were feeding with a mixed finch flock on cover crop at Melbourne on the 29th. On 10th November 22 dropped into roost in the reedbed at Church Bridge, building to 35 on 12th December and 39 on the 31st. Elsewhere 50 were at Wistow Clough on 26th November and 100, the largest flock of the second winter period, along Menthorpe Lane on 28th December.

## Appendix A: Category E

### Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

A resident bird remained at Heslington East throughout the year, occasionally moving to Heslington West. In the LDV a single was present from January to 2nd May, favouring NDC. What was presumed to be the same bird returned to Ellerton on 9th September and took up residence at Wheldrake Ings during October. It then returned to NDC in November, where it remained to the year end.

### Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

The free-flying flock remained at Heslington West and East all year. Four at Rowntree Park, the Knavesmire & Middlethorpe Ings during April, were presumably from this flock.

Monthly WeBS counts for Barnacle Geese

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
HES	31	31	31	n/c	24	22	30	21	27	17	30	26

### Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*

The free-flying flock remained at Heslington West and East all year. Six at Strensall Common on 7th May presumably related to these birds.

Monthly WeBS counts for Snow Goose

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
HES	1	22	20	n/c	18	3	17	3	17	18	19	18

### Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

The regular escaped female was at Kirkby Wharfe on 6th February and again in this area from the 12th to 21st March. It returned again to Kirkby Wharfe on 29th December.

## Appendix B: Hybrids

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## Appendix C: Unproven records (insufficient details received for confirmation)

**Goshawk** One reported in the LDV on 12th December

**Osprey** One reported at Yorkshire Air Museum, Elvington on 24th August

**Ring Ouzel** Three reported at Wheldrake Ings on 28th March

**Common Tern** A flock of nine was reported flying northeast over Bank Island on 5th October (unusually late date for this species)

**Great Skua** One reported flying over Sutton Wood, next to the River Derwent, on 27th February

**Short-eared Owl** One was reported at Bilbrough on 31st December

**Water/Rock Pipit** One flying over NDC on 19th October (OM) – accepted as one of these species, but not enough detail to confirm as to which.

## Update on records submitted to the BBRC/YNU

**American Wigeon** *Mareca americana*

Adult female seen at NDC on 10th January 2019 – rejected by the YNU as not proven.

**White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*

One at NDC on 18th March 2020 – rejected by the YNU as not proven.

**Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris*

The bird seen on 10th October 2019 by Craig Ralston, (see 2019 YOC Report), has been accepted by the YNU and is confirmed as the 8th record for the area.

## Earliest and latest dates for summer visitors/passage migrants in 2020

Species	Arrival Date/First Reported	Last Reported
Garganey	19th March	5th September
Quail	19th May	12th August
Osprey	12th April	5th October
Hobby	10th April	21st September
Oystercatcher	1st February	12th August
Little Ringed Plover	21st March	28th August
Ringed Plover *	11th May	20th September
Whimbrel <sup>†</sup>	4th April	18th May
Common Sandpiper <sup>#</sup>	16th April	19th September
Wood Sandpiper	5th May	25th August
Greenshank	22nd April	26th September
Common Tern	23rd April	11th August
Turtle Dove	3rd May	29th June
Cuckoo	6th April	24th August
Nightjar	19th May	18th August
Swift	18th April	21st September
Sand Martin	12th March	6th September
Swallow	25th March	22nd November (late)
House Martin	4th April	22nd October
Willow Warbler	1st April	13th October
Sedge Warbler	6th April	24th September
Reed Warbler	17th April	24th September
Grasshopper Warbler	21st May	29th July
Garden Warbler	10th April	11th August
Lesser Whitethroat	11th April	1st October (late)
Whitethroat	11th April	22nd September
Spotted Flycatcher	30th April	21st September
Redstart	7th April	19th September
Whinchat	14th April	8th September
Wheatear	26th March	20th September
Yellow Wagtail	6th April	29th September
Tree Pipit	15th April	1st September

Note: Chiffchaff and Blackcap have been removed from this list as some birds overwinter making it impossible to tell which birds are definitely migrants.

\* Also one unseasonal early record on 22nd Feb, and 20th Sept was the only autumn record

> There were some autumn passage records on 29th July, 2nd and 3rd August and 5th September  
# and there was a surprising singleton on 15th December

## Earliest and latest dates for winter visitors/passage migrants 2020

Species	Last reported in Spring	First reported in Autumn
Pink-footed Goose	14th May	9th September
Bewick's Swan	1st February	14th December
Whooper Swan ^	6th May	26th September
Pintail	30th April	31st August
Goldeneye	26th May	3rd October
Goosander**	26th July	20th September
Golden Plover	13th April	10th July
Ruff	11th June (late)	4th July
Dunlin	27th May	19th July
Jack Snipe	22nd April	16th September
Green Sandpiper	30th April	8th June
Fieldfare	1st May	11th October
Redwing	3rd May	17th September
Brambling	29th February	13th October

^ One summered in the LDV (with a second bird joining it for 17th August)

\*\* One female bred at Bolton Percy Ings and remained there with her ducklings



**Garganey with ducklings at Wheldrake Ings © Duncan Bye**

# Rare Breeding Birds of the Lower Derwent Valley and Skipwith Common 2020

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: <https://rbbp.org.uk/record-submission-from-live-web/> 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. of adults	No. of young	No. of Pairs			Total
			Poss.	Prob.	Confirmed	
Wigeon	16 (11 M)		0	5	0	0 - 5
Garganey	18 (9M,9F)	24 - broods of 6,8,5,5	4	1	4	4 - 9
Shoveler	90 prs	77	44	33	13	13 - 90
Pochard			0	0	1	1
Little Egret	38+ (19 prs)	34 min	x	x	19	19
Peregrine	7 prs	10 (from 3 prs)	0	4	3	3 - 7
Marsh Harrier			0	0	1	1
Red Kite			4	0	0	0 - 4
Water Rail	15 calling males, 15 prs	3+ (prob 3 broods)	0	12	3	3 - 15
Spotted Crane*	0	0	0	0	0	0
Corncrake *	0	0	0	0	0	0

\*Coverage limited by COVID restrictions

### Wigeon:

Up to 11 drakes and five ducks remained throughout May, with five apparent pairs involved. In June up to seven drakes and four females were about, but no subsequent evidence of breeding.

**Garganey:**

In April four pairs were present across the site on the 22nd with two pairs at Wheldrake on the 23rd and regularly thereafter. Four/possibly five pairs were present on the 29th/30th. Seven pairs were recorded on the 30th, with two at Bank Island and NDC and three at Wheldrake Ings.

In May nine pairs were located around the site on the 1st, with new pairs at Thornton Ellers and Hagg Bridge. Males were still present on the 4th and 5th, by which time the females were thought to be incubating – appearing more typically at dawn and dusk. Single drakes were still at Bank Island and Wheldrake on the same date (with presumed females now nesting), along with additional pairs at Wheldrake and North Duffield. Up to two pairs remained regularly at Bank Island thereafter, with two drakes chasing a female at Wheldrake on the 16th, when single pairs were also present at NDC, Hagg Bridge and Thornton Ellers – a total of six pairs and a single drake on that date. Four drakes and at least two females remained at Wheldrake, with a pair at Bank Island and two additional pairs elsewhere to month end – at least five pairs, possibly as many as seven.

Good numbers lingered into June with up to two drakes and a female at Bank Island on the 1st, with a drake present daily throughout. Three drakes were recorded at Wheldrake on the 8th. A single female appeared on Swantail Ings with six ducklings on the 12th, with a brood of eight at Bank Island on the 15th and five at Thornton Ellers on 23rd. Five large grown ducklings were still present on the pool at Wheldrake on the 28th June which remained until 21st July.

**Shoveler:**

About 90 pairs were present across the site by the end of April but fewer by the end of May. Although the usual large numbers of pairs were present early in the season, smaller numbers remained throughout the breeding season, with only a handful of broods recorded during June - total of 8 broods (51 ducklings). Broods of nine and two remained on the pool at Wheldrake between the 1st and 7th July. Further broods of five, two and seven appeared there between the 11th and 17th, followed by the appearance of broods on the 19th (four) and 23rd (eight).

**Pintail:**

A pair at Wheldrake and Bank Island lingered until the end of April but departed thereafter – no evidence of any breeding attempts.

**Pochard:**

Following two individuals at the end of April, a single was recorded at Bank Island on the 17th and was followed by two females at Wheldrake on the 19th and a single on the 21st. A fledged juvenile was then present on the 22nd/23rd, with a female still lingering on the 24th. It is likely a pair bred nearby but off site.

**Little Egret:**

A species which continues to increase each year. A visit to the heronry on 7th May produced a count of 19 active nests, including some with small young. In

June numbers and activity continued to increase with several pairs fledging around the 18th-21st. Up to 21 were in the Wheldrake area on the 21st, whilst 34 juveniles were counted coming out of the heronry at dawn on the 23rd. 15 were present on the pool at Wheldrake on 1st July with up to 10 daily thereafter. A colour-ringed bird, blue H9 was present there on the 7th. 14 were present on the 8th with 12 on the 12th/13th. 14 were present again between the 14th – 17th. Up to 10 remained until the 20th with eight thereafter.

### **Great White Egret:**

Continues to increase in frequency and numbers during the year – records included here for completeness and to monitor further increases. Although fewer birds were present during the breeding season (no records in June this year), a number of records were had during the autumn, with three individuals observed at Bank Island in September, including one wearing a Belarus colour-ring. Eight records were logged in October, with 2-4 birds thought to be involved.

### **Common Crane:**

Recorded here for completeness as a potential future colonist. Continues to increase in frequency during the year, but the apparent concerted effort to breed of a few years ago has not been maintained.

### **Peregrine:**

A species which continues to be encountered throughout the breeding season. At least four-five pairs were present in the wider area in May, with seven pairs subsequently observed nesting on pylons during the breeding season – once again time restraints prevented full monitoring across the area. Four immatures were observed on the NNR throughout August.

### **Marsh Harrier:**

Frequent throughout the breeding season as per last year. A single was observed carrying food at Wheldrake in April, with a pair subsequently thought to have attempted breeding nearby at an un-disclosed site – remaining there into July. Adults with accompanying broods continued to appear in August, but whether these had bred off site or originate from the Humber (or indeed as wing-tagged birds from September suggest, further afield, or both, remains unclear). Total of nine individuals were thought to be present in August.

### **Red Kite:**

A species which continues to increase each year – now more common during the summer than Marsh Harriers. At least four/five breeding/non-breeding pairs were thought to be present in the area in May, with four pairs remaining in June.

### **Water Rail:**

Back to a more normal year following the bumper season in 2018. Calling birds were concentrated at the favoured site at Wheldrake Ings, with 12 pairs located



across the whole site during May. Proof of breeding came during July, with a single juvenile recorded on the 16th/17th, followed by a smaller juvenile, thought to be from a second brood, on the 29th. At least three pairs were present on Skipwith Common NNR with young also observed there.

**Spotted Crane:**

Following a good year in 2019 with several records in spring, and two showy individuals in September, no records were received this year, however coverage was limited due to COVID restrictions.

**Corncrake:**

Following a poor year in 2019 with a maximum of three individuals, no confirmed records were recorded in 2020, although coverage was limited due to COVID restrictions. Two unconfirmed reports were received from the Ellerton Ings in early May.

**Ruff:**

As with many species, coverage was reduced and survey work was less intensive, but 2020 appeared a poor year – in line with the long-term trend of this. Only singles were reported during May and June, with no evidence of summering or breeding.

**Black-tailed Godwit:**

Large flocks on passage were present during April many of which lingered throughout the month. On the 22nd a pair were seen displaying at Wheldrake; however, there was no evidence of any breeding attempts, and no records throughout the remainder of the season, other than a single displaying pair on one date.

**Category B – Less Scarce Species**

**Breeding success of Category B species in the LDV**

(N.B. some of these are now not considered by the RBBP but are included here for completeness and comparison with previous years' submissions)

Species	Max. no. of adults	No. of young	No. of Pairs			
			Poss.	Prob.	Confirmed	Total
Gadwall		64 min (only 2 caught and ringed)	17	39	11	11 - 67
Quail	26 singing males		11 (incl.1 on adjacent arable)	14	1	0 - 26

Hobby			0	5	0	0 - 5
Woodlark*	8 singing males (April)		4	3	1	1 - 8
Willow Tit*			2	3	6	6 - 11

\*Coverage limited by COVID restrictions

### **Common Quail:**

Following several poor years, 2020 was another 'Quail' year in the Lower Derwent Valley. After the first early birds at the end of May, an influx was noted during early June, which continued throughout the month – resulting in a total of 23 singing males located. Further singing males were noted in July and August. Intensive survey work, including ringing, produced a greater insight into the species status in the valley.

### **Woodlark:**

Following the first returning birds in April with eight singing males (at Skipwith Common NNR), no further records were logged, perhaps in part due to limited coverage this year. It is also known that recreational pressure resulting from Lockdown caused issues.

### **Willow Tit:**

Following a full survey carried out last year, coverage was limited this year due to missing the first part of the season due to COVID restrictions. Wheldrake Ings, Bank Island and Melbourne remained the stronghold, with pairs also present this year at Seavy Carr, Skipwith Common (two) and North Duffield Carrs (two). Confirmed breeding at: Melbourne (1 pair seen feeding two fledged young), Bank Island (broods of two and four) and Wheldrake (three broods of four, two and three) – with five juvenile individuals caught and ringed at this site.

# Rarity Finders' Accounts

## Where Eagles Share!

By Neil Cooper

When the world changed on 23rd March introducing a UK wide lockdown, nature provided a means of coping with this strange new restricted reality. The one hour local walk became the highlight of the day and opened many people's eyes to the wider wonders of the natural world. The continued glorious sunny weather brought the unfolding spring into sharper focus; the greening bushes and trees, the flowering wild plants, as well as the volume and intensity of birdsong; all seemed more meaningful.

Three days in, while working in my garden in Melbourne late morning of Thursday 26th, I heard the call of a Buzzard above the field to the south of the garden. I looked up to see four Buzzards mobbing a huge raptor. Whoa! - I ran inside to grab my binoculars shouting "eagle, eagle." At that point I wasn't sure exactly what it was, but it seemed likely to be some form of eagle.

The Buzzards were dwarfed by the size of this bird – I would say it was about twice their size. It was soaring slowly and seemed unhurried despite the attention of the Buzzards. It was mostly dark brown, the bright sunlight caught some whiteness in plumage, but it was difficult to tell how this was configured as I focused more on size and shape. However, the overall impression was that the bird was very dark! The tail was not noticeably long or wedge shaped but showed some paleness. The head and neck though were prominent with a very large bill, clearly visible when deflecting the Buzzards. In fact when the bird did turn its head to fend off attacks, its neck still seemed prominent. The bird showed no leg rings or wing tags and did not call – in fact after the initial calling of the Buzzards, they became silent. If anything they seemed half-hearted in their attempts to see it off. It was mostly defending itself and soon decided it had had enough, eventually flying away towards the southeast with slow deep wing beats. The bird was viewed for no more than a couple of minutes.

My gut feeling remained that it was an eagle due to its size, and although the wings on this bird did not quite give the analogous "barn door" impression, they were still long and wide. The initial feeling was juvenile White-tailed Eagle given the overall size, head and heavy bill. It was too bulky and did not have enough white in the plumage for a juvenile Golden Eagle for example. However an escaped raptor still could not be ruled out.

I had hoped some birders would pick the bird up, to confirm its identity, as it moved south/southeast but no sightings were reported on BirdGuides during the day. However, video footage from Bishop Wilton half an hour before my sighting, sent to Jono Leadley, YOC Recorder, and a YNU-confirmed juvenile White-tailed Eagle near Doncaster Airport in the afternoon, put my mind at rest. It was then that

I realised what a truly fantastic event I had witnessed, after all it must be the ultimate garden tick!

I was interested to find after contacting the Roy Dennis Foundation, responsible for the Isle of Wight re-introduction scheme, that despite two tagged/tracked birds visiting the North York Moors in April, the bird I had seen was not GPS tracked and thought to be of wild continental origin, possibly from Holland.

In those brief few minutes as that magnificent raptor sailed lazily overhead, I reflected on the severe restrictions to our freedom while the animal kingdom continued about its business. And, even more of a snub, the sight of an eagle, free to fly from Continental Europe, whilst I could only look on and wonder when the confinement would end.

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## **Red-rumped Swallow**

**By Jono Leadley**

Saturday morning – 25th April 2020. The weather had changed to a slight murk with a light easterly. The kind of conditions that would send me scurrying to Wheldrake Ings or maybe Flamborough Head, full of anticipation for some top spring birding. But not this year. The current reality is that I, like everybody else, is birding close to home due to Lockdown restrictions. I decided to cycle out to the south of the village to check some fields and rough grassland for migrants. Maybe a Ring Ouzel or a Whinchat would turn up. Fingers crossed. I checked the pea field just south of Bishopthorpe: no Dotterels, but an Oystercatcher was nice. Just down the road two Swallows sat on the wires and I stopped underneath and took a pic with my phone. Gorgeous birds. A little further on and I noticed a bunch of hirundines flying low over the camping field and ditch next to the road. There were a few House Martins among them, so I stopped for a look. Several were sitting on the telegraph wires including some martins, so I got my scope out for a look. Then, a Red-rumped Swallow flew low over the grass right in front of me, showing off a shiny blue back, peachy collar and orangey rump. WHAAATTT????!!!!

Surely not, this is Acaster Malbis, not Flamborough! It banked round and I saw the peachy underparts, pale throat and 'stuck on' long black tail. I could see that some of the flock were still sitting on the wires, so I rapidly set my scope up on them in the hope it would land. About forty Swallows, House and Sand Martins lined the wires. The Red-rump continued to cruise around low over the turf in front of me – was this really happening? I was shaking and my head was spinning. I messaged Chris Gomersall who lives very close-by and he said he was on his way. I tried to get a handheld phone video of it – my only option unless it decided to land on the wires. I didn't know whether the phone with its tiny zoom would pick it up, but it did. After a few minutes and to my delight, the bird then settled on the wires and I managed a first bit of phone scoped video. Relief! What a stunner! It

had really long tail streamers, so was presumably a male. Within moments, Chris arrived and to my relief the bird was still sitting on the wire allowing him to get straight on it. The bird preened frequently, between bouts of feeding, where it did a low circuit of the camping field, the nearby sheep field and the ditch. Keeping our social distance (!) we moved to a better position where we could get closer views when it came back to perch. The last time it perched, it sat further along the wires with the trees behind, giving us more colour. Superb! On taking flight, the flock of c40 hirundines gained some height over the Ship Inn car park. The RRS was easy to pick out, with more languid flight and big, long, forked tail. It glided round in lazy circles among the more frenetic martins. Chris drew my attention to a Swift that had joined the throng, my first of the year! A Sparrowhawk cruised through a few minutes later – perhaps why they were nervous. All of a sudden, about 10.40am, the flock disappeared, leaving no trace of the Red-rump or any of its gang. I didn't see it again.

Red-rumped Swallow is a bird I have always looked for in April in flocks of hirundines, but never found. To find one anywhere would be a treat but within a mile of my house is just amazing and feels like a dream. In any other circumstances, I would be elsewhere, but this just shows what local patching can deliver.

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## **Red-footed Falcon**

**Found by Craig Storton (write up by Jono Leadley)**

Sometimes, the discovery of a rare bird can be attributed to a fortuitous chain of events.

On 15th June, Craig Storton, a birdwatcher and bird photographer chatted to a farmer near the small village of Biggin, in the southeast of the recording area. The farmer commented that he had seen 'a falcon with a white head' recently. Craig decided to check this out and to his delight found the bird still present, sitting on wires near the farm. Being quite confiding, Craig managed to get some great photos of it. He suspected the bird was a Red-footed Falcon and that evening sent the photos to a few friends and acquaintances to check his identification. One recipient was Paul Doherty, who immediately confirmed the bird's identity; but it was too late to do anything about it, being dark. Paul then emailed Jono Leadley, the YOC Recorder with Craig's photos and some details. The falcon had been present on the wires until 8.45pm but had been lost flying off to the north.

The last accepted record for the York area was back in 2008 at Howden, so it really was about time there was a bird that stayed put long enough for local birders to catch up with it!

On Tuesday 16th June, Jono received the news on his early morning dog walk and decided it had to be worth a look. He tried the lanes and fields around the Biggin area to the east of Sherburn-in-Elmet without success, widening the search to Little Fenton and Ryther, all to no avail. Giving the original area one last try,



**White-tailed Eagle with Buzzard** east of A614 at Robin Hood Airport 26.03.2020 after it was seen over Neil's Garden  
© Clive Featherstone (left)

**Red-Rumped Swallow**  
© Jono Leadley (centre left)

**Red-footed Falcon**  
© Craig Storton (centre right)  
© Hannah Martin (below)





**Black Kites over Wheldrake Ings** © Duncan Bye (top)

**Hoopoe** © Claire Dyson (right)

**Juvenile Common Rosefinch**  
© Nick Carter (below left)

**Franklin's Gull** at NDC  
© Oliver Metcalf (below right)



before heading back home to work, Jono spotted a large raptor circling low over a crop field, so he pulled up to investigate. Not a Marsh Harrier as he'd hoped, but a fine Red Kite. However, he noticed a falcon sitting on the wires in the distance – and the hunched, long-winged jizz looked good for a Red-foot! Within moments Jono had got his scope up, which revealed the pale buffy head and dark grey mantle of a Red-footed Falcon! Fantastic! Having put the news out to the local grapevine and news services, Jono shot round to the farm track which leads to the kennels and the farm to get a closer look.

The bird was very confiding and, after a brief hunting foray into the field for a beetle, flew towards Jono and landed on the telephone wires. The buffy head and underparts identified the bird as a female; both adult and first-summer males would be predominantly blue-grey on the head and underparts, while her age was confirmed as a first-summer (second calendar-year) by the paleness of her head and underparts and fine streaking along the sides of the breast. On these closer views, the bird's tertials could be seen to be worn juvenile feathers. Meanwhile, Craig arrived; he had been watching the bird from his car. The two did a socially-distanced high five and enjoyed lovely views of the bird hunting from the wires at close range.

Within 20 minutes the first local birders began to arrive on the scene and shared the enjoyment of this great bird. At about 10.35am after a tussle with a male Kestrel, the bird unexpectedly flew steadily off northeast and disappeared into the distance. Would this be the last we would see of her? It seemed so, and despite a number of people searching the area, she did not reappear that day. It was then with great relief to those who missed her on the Tuesday, that she was back on her favourite wires the following morning and showed on and off for most of the day, sometimes going missing for a few hours, possibly to rest up in nearby trees between bouts of feeding, or possibly to drink and bathe.

She became somewhat of a celebrity with many birders making the trip to Biggin to admire her. The farmer informed Craig that she had been present about a week, so it looked like she had settled in the area and was feeding well. This small falcon is mostly insectivorous, catching dragonflies and other insects in flight, in the manner of a Hobby, but also hunting from a perch, shrike-like, which seemed to be the favoured mode of the Biggin individual. She was seen to take beetles and earthworms and apparently had been klepto-parasitising the local Blackbirds and robbing them of their worms!

Red-footed Falcons breed in eastern Europe and Asia, wintering in Africa. Their migratory behaviour results in them being a regular overshoot to Britain, particularly in spring when their migration takes a more westerly route. In some years when there are prolonged south-easterly or easterly winds, good numbers can turn up, with 1992 being a particularly memorable influx, resulting in the second confirmed record for the York area, at Fulford Golf Course. Good numbers have been found in Britain this year, despite the limitations of lockdown, with lingering birds at various sites including Thorne Moors in South Yorkshire.



## **Black Kites Surprise**

**By Duncan Bye and Jono Leadley**

Arriving at Bank Island at around 06:30 on Sunday 2nd August 2020, I made my way down the track to the Pool Hide at Wheldrake Ings, one of the few remaining areas of water on site. The week had seen the rest of the meadow at Wheldrake Ings cut and baling operations started. On the way down, three Kestrels and a couple of Buzzards were using the bales as vantage points for hunting. On reaching the pool there wasn't anything unexpected, just the usual Green Sandpipers and Little Egrets. I was joined in the hide by Adam Firth, who picked up a distant Red Kite at 07:40. The highlight after this was three Whimbrel heading southeast at 08:05. Shortly after Adam left to return home.

At around 09:27 and still in Pool hide with another visitor, I saw a couple of Kites appear over the meadow close to the back of the pool from the direction of Swantail Hide. I looked at them with my binoculars and assumed they were Red Kites, which are regularly present in the area and breed close to the site. I often see them in the cut meadows at this time of year, so they weren't a surprise. With them appearing fairly close, I managed to get a couple of pictures as they continued to slowly head west. Again I assumed them to be juvenile Red Kites as they appeared too dark and not as well marked or bright as the adults, which are often present. Another birder did enter the hide at this point to ask if they were harriers or kites. I explained they were Red Kites and continued to watch them disappear from view. I eventually left for home at around 13:00 happy to have seen some Whimbrel having had to miss the spring roost this year.

Later in the afternoon, I downloaded my photos and Tweeted out the day's interesting sightings along with photos, including one of the two Kites which had flown past. In the evening, Jono Leadley (YOC Recorder) sent me a message saying, 'didn't know you'd seen Black Kites today.' Initially I thought he was joking, but a bit later called him for his thoughts. The photos were also sent to Jack Ashton-Booth; both he and Jono confirmed the identification, and the news was released late evening.

I never expected to see a Black Kite at Wheldrake Ings, let alone two. I was lucky to have taken some pictures and that Jono actually had a proper look at them.

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## **Hoopoe Discovery**

**By Adam Firth**

These accounts often start with a description along the lines of how the finder had spent the morning scouring the fields and hedgerows or local wetland, hoping for the earned and deserved reward of a special bird, a magical autumn migrant, and then using their finest field technique and identification skills to clinch that all important ID. And I have spent countless hours and days doing and hoping for just that. But this account isn't one of those. Other than the fact, like probably all keen

birders, I give perhaps more than just a passing glance to any and every bird that is in my general vicinity, this is an account of pure good fortune.

My Saturday morning routine sees me at 9.00am setting off on a drive from Elvington to Rawcliffe Park and Ride to take part in a boot camp style fitness class. On the morning of 26th September I needed to set off a bit earlier than normal to get some fuel on route. Before setting off I spent a couple of minutes emptying the car of valuables, including all my optics. Once on the road I found myself stuck behind a tractor on the B1228, Elvington lane, so travelling about 30 mph slower than I normally would along there. I eventually did manage to overtake and carried on towards the A1079. Coming round the last of the bends, I noticed a Mistle Thrush-sized bird, with bold black and white marked wings and peachy head flying from the entrance of Manor Farm heading straight across my path. I had to brake to avoid it. From first sight it was already obviously a Hoopoe, there's nothing to really confuse a Hoopoe with. Unbelievably, it then preceded to land in the road about 30 feet from me. I was still moving towards it and had to brake and stop for it, finishing about 10 feet from the bird. So, sat in the middle of the B1228 in front of me was a Hoopoe. Long flattened crest, long curved bill, bold black and white markings, lovely peachy colours. It was a very surreal moment. I thought "There's no doubt that's a Hoopoe in the middle of the road in front of me, but how can that possibly be?" After what would have been only 2 or 3 seconds, the bird realised it wasn't the best place for it to be and flew off to my left with its characteristic low, flappy flight, showing again its beautiful, unmistakable markings. I parked up a little further along and sent some over excited, garbled messages to the wrong WhatsApp group about what I had just seen. Luckily, one of the members of that group spotted my mistake got the message out to the local birders. I got out of the car to go look for the bird, I wanted a longer look but arrrrghh, of course I'd just emptied the car of all my optics! Despite the ease of identifying Hoopoes, it was obvious that trying to relocate one without optics in the vast surrounding fields would be fruitless, so I continued on to Rawcliffe Park for my fitness class, still not quite believing what had just happened. Some birders did come and look for it at the original spot but with no joy. The hope was that from the direction it headed and being just a short flight over the A64, Heslington East could be its next stop, so that was checked too, but it couldn't be found. Amazingly, that afternoon pictures of the Hoopoe emerged on Facebook from, I'm sure, an equally shocked and lucky observer, outside a carpet shop they were visiting in Poppleton, the other side of York and only a mile or so where I travelled to for my fitness class.

So, rather than recounting a tale of how, after the endless hours of dedicated patch watching, calling on everything I know about the best places for a migrant to drop in and careful scrutiny of plumage details of every bird I see, a day of birding finally pays off with cracking local find, here is my account of how the random events of emptying my car of valuables, needing to stop for diesel, and a frustratingly slow tractor ended with a Hoopoe plonking itself down in the middle of the B1228 as I'm driving into York.

## **Common Rosefinch at Bank Island, LDV NNR – new for the reserve and York recording area**

**By Craig Ralston**

Throughout September when weather conditions allowed, I had been running a single 60-foot mist net behind the NNR base at Bank Island, from just before first light for an hour or two. This was in order to ring a sample of passage Blackcaps, using the extensive favoured bramble patch, and associated scrub adjacent to the Water Treatment Works. A total of 60 Blackcaps had been caught and ringed during September, but over the last few days of the month numbers had started to drop off. I initially hadn't been intending to run the net on the 29th, however, as I had a small group of visitors coming in for an outdoor 'distanced' meeting, I thought it would be nice to open the net beforehand, and hopefully catch a few local resident birds in order to run a small ringing demonstration for them, whilst explaining our work on the reserve. Blue Tits, Long-tailed Tits and Robins are not species high up on the priority list but are always popular for visitor demonstrations.

After just 20 minutes of the net being open, I returned to the ringing area and was pleased to see three birds already in the net – at least something to show the group. I could see a Dunnock, Blackbird and what I assumed to be a juvenile Greenfinch on first glance. However, on arriving closer to the net to extract this bird, I was immediately puzzled by the plumage tones, which even for a juvenile Greenfinch were extremely brown, and lacked any green margins on the primaries or tail. The bird also showed two buff-white wing bars, at which point half my brain was saying 'Common Rosefinch,' at the same time as the other half was trying hard to convince itself it 'had' to be an aberrant Greenfinch. Birds out of context – unusual, scarce or unexpected, even more so in the hand, can sometimes throw you – and here it appeared I had just that: all of the above.

I returned to the office where myself and LDV volunteer Nick Carter, had a good look and processed the bird, agreeing that we had a first for the York area in our midst, before making a few hasty phone calls to those within striking distance.

The bird was ringed by Mike Jackson, who arrived shortly afterwards, and was aged as a first year (juvenile) with a weight of 20.3 grams and was noted not to be carrying any fat. Duncan Bye, Adam Firth, Tim Jones, and Dave Waudby, all made it to the NNR Base in time to see the bird in the hand before release, with Jonathan Begbie already being present on site with the volunteering party. A few quick photographs were obtained before the bird was released from the NNR base garden, flying a short distance into a nearby Ash tree. It wasn't seen again until late afternoon, when it appeared briefly in the hedge which runs down towards the first hide at Bank Island.

A most unexpected addition to the LDV NNR and York areas avian fauna list. That it just happened to fly through that precise 60-foot, out of all of the LDV, perhaps best hints at what other birds must sneak through the area undetected.

## Franklin's Gull – another York first

By Oliver Metcalf

I started 2020 living in a small flat in central Manchester. Lockdown turned what had been an acceptable city bolthole into something of a prison cell, so in early autumn when the opportunity to move back to Yorkshire, and to the Lower Derwent Valley arrived, I jumped at the chance. Subsequently, elating in my newfound space and preponderance of birds nearby, I had been visiting North Duffield Carrs almost daily. Saturday 12th December was no different, and by early afternoon I was ensconced at Garganey hide surveying a grey and windy reserve.

There was little of real interest, and I passed the time helping an inexperienced father and son find and identify some of the scarcer species present. As is often the case at this time of year, small flocks of Black-headed and Common Gulls passed through the reserve, stopping briefly to bathe and drink. After a period of busy turnover, I picked out a small gull with a dark grey mantle on the water, away from the others, which I was immediately puzzled by. As it turned its head, I saw a broad white eye-ring and black hood. Alarm bells rang. The bird matched my mental image for Franklin's Gull, but I was racking my brains to try and remember what some of the medium-sized hybrid gulls that had been recorded at Midlands reservoirs over the years had looked like. I gave some directions to the bird to the inexperienced father and son who were at the other end of the hide, and then after only a few seconds of watching the bird down the scope, started to digiscope and take videos.

When I was confident I had good enough documentation, about 5 minutes after the bird's arrival, I spent 2-3 minutes ringing and texting news out. When I returned to my scope, the bird was no longer present, and to my horror the other two birders had stopped watching it to follow a Golden Plover that had flown in. A scan of the pools failed to relocate it, and several large flocks of small gulls swirled through, so that it felt like there was almost 100% turnover in the gulls present in the next 15 minutes or so. Despite staying until dusk, and several other birders arriving, we did not relocate it. However, the documentation I had obtained was good enough to rule out a hybrid and confirm the bird as a Franklin's.

Fortunately for the other birders in the area, Jono Leadley was able to relocate the bird at Thorganby Ings the next morning, where it was present for just over an hour and watched by a dozen or so birders in awful weather conditions before flying north. This bird is presumed to be the same individual seen near Bradford on the 12/9/2020 then Redcar Tarn 13-14/9/2020, and at St. Aidan's RSPB reserve from 18-27/5/2020.

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# Raptor Survey

## By Paul Doherty

It is clear that 2020 will be remembered for the COVID-19 pandemic which brought a lot of new words like furlough and self-isolating. It also brought lockdown to Britain on 23rd March and everyone was required to stay at home, except for essential activities, which included daily exercise.

No longer able to drive outside their local areas, birdwatchers had of necessity, to focus on their local birds. In order to extract some value from this and to provide extra interest it was suggested on the YorkBirding email group that lockdown could be profitably used to make timed counts of raptors (i.e. day flying birds of prey, including falcons, but excluding owls).

The aim was to have a large enough sample of timed counts (i.e. duration of the count) to give an indication of the relative abundance of the different species across the Club area. The initial information was interesting and when lockdown ended in early July 2020, observers were asked to continue making timed counts.

This short article summarises the results at the end of 2020, but the survey will continue through 2021, and hopefully beyond. One reason for continuing the survey is because coverage has been patchy, with some 10km squares receiving good coverage, but others receiving very limited or even no coverage.

Coverage was best in the southern and central part of the Club area, with the six northernmost 10km squares which account for 40% of the Club area, receiving only 4.6% of the coverage. The table below details the hours of coverage per 10km square, the number of raptors recorded per square and the number of raptors per hour.

<b>SE</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Hours</b>	390	190.5	163	0	2.5	191.5	292	218	24.5	15.5	38.5	384	7	27.5	15
<b>Raptors</b>	840	366	319	0	2	377	549	186	38	46	96	604	12	45	24
<b>Raptors per hour</b>	2.15	1.92	1.96		0.8	1.97	1.88	0.85	1.55	2.97	2.49	1.57	1.71	1.63	1.6

Although the number of raptors seen per hour is interesting, special caution is needed interpreting the results from squares with limited coverage, as these smaller data sets are more likely to give atypical results. Indeed it is noticeable that the two highest counts of raptors per hour come from squares (SE67 and 73) with limited coverage. At the other extreme, two squares have an average of less than one raptor per hour, one of them (SE57) had very limited coverage and the low figure in the other, SE65, is probably explained by the fact that a large part of that square is built-up.

A total of 13 different species was recorded with rarities represented by Black Kite and Red-footed Falcon, and only single records for Goshawk and Hen Harrier. Peregrine and Hobby had 53 and 49 records respectively and there were

three records each for Osprey and Merlin. There were no records for Honey Buzzard and Rough-legged Buzzard.

Five species accounted for 97% of the records and in order of records received they were – Buzzard 50%, Kestrel 21%, Red Kite 11%, Sparrowhawk 9% and Marsh Harrier 6%. The relatively high figures for Red Kite and Marsh Harrier reflect the good coverage of the Derwent and Wharfe valleys and would doubtless change with better coverage of the northern area.

If those five species are listed in terms of average number of birds per hour the figures are – Buzzard 0.89, Kestrel 0.37, Red Kite 0.20, Sparrowhawk 0.16 and Marsh Harrier 0.10.

The detectability of birds is doubtless also a factor. Although Sparrowhawks regularly soar and fly at height, they keep to cover more than the other four and are less likely to be recorded.

The success of the Buzzard is confirmed, with over twice as many records as its closest rival the Kestrel. A very different situation from 1966 when the Club started and the Buzzard was recorded less than annually.

If judged solely by the number of records, it could be concluded that raptors are less common in the hillier, north of our area. The timed counts which have been received so far suggest that the lack of records from the northern squares has more to do with a lack of observers than a lack of raptors. That is clearly illustrated by the fact that although only 8% of the Buzzard records came from the northern six 10km squares (which make up 40% of the Club area) that is explained by only 6.3% of the count hours coming from that area. In fact, the reporting rate for the six northern 10km squares was 1.19 Buzzards per hour, compared with a reporting rate of 0.87 per hour for the central and southern 10km squares.

It is hoped that continuing this survey will allow us to produce a more detailed account with maps which show the relative abundance of raptors across the whole of the Club area, but more timed counts are needed to do that.

I am very grateful to all the observers whose timed counts contributed to this initial summary. I hope that they will continue to submit records and would encourage others to take part – all timed counts are welcome, but especially ones from the north of the Club area.

# Bird ringing on University of York campus in 2020

By Colin Beale

Bird ringing was carried out on the University of York campus in 2020 by 11 UoY graduate students, post-docs and staff, and an undergraduate student from the University of Oxford. Ringing took place entirely on Heslington East campus, with all mist-netting taking place in an area around the west end of the Main Lake, and with a newly created duck trap on the lake nearby. Birds were mist-netted (over 22 sessions) or caught in the duck trap. Ringing data contribute to the British Trust for Ornithology's national ringing scheme, but also served to assist the UoY Estates Operations Team with their conservation work, and to demonstrate bird ringing for undergraduate biology students. For the first time in 2020 ringing on Heslington East formed one of the activities for third year biology students involved in a field course. It was an enjoyable experience for all, providing convenient practice and training for 11 ringers throughout the year.



*Selected highlights of ringing on Campus in 2020. Clockwise from top left: Woodcock, Tree Sparrow, Garden Warbler, Cetti's Warbler and Siskin, all ringed for the first time in 2020, and Lesser Redpoll, larger numbers caught this year included two interesting recaptures.*

Despite COVID restrictions, 466 birds of 33 species were ringed during campus mist-netting in 2020 (Table 1), slightly more than in 2019, and a total of 641 unique captures were recorded. Blue Tit, Reed Warbler, Long-tailed Tit, Reed Bunting and Blackbird were the most frequently handled species, with the increase in Long-tailed Tits compared to 2019 particularly notable. Although slightly down on 2019 due to COVID restrictions, the number of Reed Warblers ringed on campus in 2020 (50) is again locally significant. A total of 11 new species were handled for the first time on campus in 2020: Mallard, Moorhen, Woodcock, Rook, Swallow, Cetti's Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Garden Warbler, Tree Sparrow, Chaffinch and Siskin. The first two reflect the success of the new duck trap, the Swallows were caught at a small roost during August, and the Tree Sparrows and general increase in finches probably reflect the addition of a winter bird table near the hide, as well as use of a mixed finch lure during autumn and winter trapping sessions. Cetti's Warblers are increasing in the UK and small numbers were located at a number of locations around York in the late summer period, probably reflecting local dispersal events. Other notable changes in status on campus include the apparent decrease in Willow Warblers and large increase in Chiffchaff. These changes may reflect differences associated with the increased maturity of the woodland patches on campus or may be associated with wider changes across the UK. Several interesting movements were recorded in 2020, including our first recapture of a bird ringed overseas (see map). This bird, a Reed Warbler caught in late spring, had previously been ringed in France during its autumn migration in 2019. Several Reed Warblers have now been exchanged with the next nearest breeding population, in the Lower Derwent Valley (where one Reed Bunting had also been originally ringed), but two others are of note: one had been



*Ringing locations of selected birds recaptured at the University of York.*

breeding in Tyne & Wear and was recaptured on campus during its southern migration, while a bird breeding on campus had been ringed the previous autumn on the south coast. Two other recaptures of birds ringed far from York were both Lesser Redpolls captured during the autumn. One had previously been ringed breeding in the Lancashire Pennines, this was originally caught during the winter of 2019 in Aberdeenshire, indicating the flexible movement strategies of these birds. As the number of birds ringed on campus gradually increases we expect to hear more about the movements of 'our' birds!



**Table 1: Birds ringed on University of York Campus**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Total 2019</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>Adult</b>	<b>New 2020</b>	<b>Retraps 2020</b>	<b>Total 2020</b>	<b>Total new *</b>
Mallard	0	2	1	3	10	13	3
Moorhen	0	3	3	6	2	8	6
Oystercatcher	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lapwing	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Woodcock	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Snipe	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Common Tern	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Woodpigeon	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Kingfisher	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Rook	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Coal Tit	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Great Tit	46	14	7	21	9	30	73
Blue Tit	72	44	28	72	36	108	157
Swallow	0	3	1	4	0	4	4
Cetti's Warbler	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Long-tailed Tit	12	3	23	26	22	48	42
Willow Warbler	20	4	7	11	5	16	32
Chiffchaff	6	22	5	27	1	28	33
Sedge Warbler	0	1	5	6	1	7	6
Reed Warbler	73	27	23	50	36	86	127
Blackcap	24	25	5	30	4	34	57
Garden Warbler	0	0	1	1	0	1	1
Whitethroat	4	0	1	1	0	1	5
Goldcrest	5	8	4	12	1	13	18
Wren	5	7	1	8	5	13	16
Treecreeper	0	1	0	1	0	1	2
Blackbird	31	8	23	31	6	37	70
Redwing	21	4	3	7	0	7	28
Song Thrush	1	4	2	6	0	6	8
Robin	33	10	3	13	15	28	49
House Sparrow	1	0	2	2	0	2	3
Tree Sparrow	0	0	2	2	0	2	3
Dunnock	16	13	6	19	11	30	43
Chaffinch	0	5	6	11	0	11	11
Greenfinch	2	3	5	8	0	8	10
Siskin	0	2	0	2	0	2	2
Goldfinch	6	1	2	3	0	3	9
Lesser Redpoll	1	17	11	28	2	30	29
Linnet	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bullfinch	14	11	7	18	4	22	33
Reed Bunting	17	17	17	34	5	39	51

\*Total new - refers to running total over the years of individuals ringed at the site (not just 2019/20)

# Bird Ringing at Summerfield Nursery, Upper Poppleton

By Mark Lucas and Hugh Brazier

Between 1st January and 31st December 2020 we ringed 543 birds of 30 species at Summerfield Nursery, and birds were recaptured on 164 occasions, making a total of 707 encounters. Three of the re-trapped birds had originally been ringed elsewhere, and 50 had been ringed at Summerfield in a previous year, so the total number of individuals caught at Summerfield in 2020 was 596 (543 + 3 + 50). The catch was considerably lower than in 2019 (when 865 birds were ringed, plus 191 recaptures). This was largely due to the COVID-19 restrictions, which meant a two-month suspension of ringing activity between mid-March and mid-May. Table 1. shows the ringed and recaptured totals.

The range of species caught, and the relative numbers of each species, mostly seem to reflect the birds present in and around the nursery. It is not possible to be sure of this, however, without undertaking surveys of breeding and wintering birds using a different methodology, such as the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) BBS or BirdTrack surveys. This is something to consider in future years.

We caught seven species of warbler during the summer. Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat are all common species and were expected, but the Reed warbler, Grasshopper Warbler and two Lesser Whitethroats were more surprising. Reed Warblers nest mainly in reedbeds; the bird we caught on 14 August was a recently fledged juvenile, probably making its first move away from the nest in preparation for its autumn migration to sub-Saharan Africa. Lesser Whitethroats are not uncommon but are not so often seen; it is a species of woodland edge, thick scrub, and tall hedgerows. The biggest surprise was the Grasshopper Warbler, as no evidence of the species being present had been recorded prior to capture. Like the Reed Warbler this was a juvenile, but was caught a month earlier, in mid-July; at that early date it is unlikely to have travelled far, and it had probably been reared not too far from Summerfield, in a nest in a scrubby field-margin. This is a species to listen out for in future years. Chiffchaff and Blackcap migrate to southern Europe and north Africa each autumn, but the other five warblers are all trans-Saharan migrants. This is a remarkable feat for such small birds – a Willow Warbler, for example, weighs only about 8 grams. One day, with luck, we will recapture one of 'our' birds back at the nursery for a second or third summer.

Bird of the year was probably the Long-eared Owl, an adult male caught on 16th October. But the most important birds at Summerfield Nursery are the Tree Sparrows. There is a thriving colony at the nursery, and we have so far (up to 31 December 2020) caught 303 birds (plus 41 re-trap events).

Movements away saw two birds ringed at the site going to Acomb (2-3km), including a Robin killed by a cat, while a Yellowhammer was caught in another ringer's net at Riccall Ings, 16km away. There was some movement between Summerfield Nursery and Harewood Whin (Rufforth Tip) too, with recaptures of

five birds ringed as juveniles at one or other site: Chiffchaff, Goldfinch (two), Dunnock and Great Tit. Of birds ringed and recaptured at Summerfield, one Blue Tit ringed as a full adult in November 2018 turned up in the nets again in October 2020.

**Table 1. Ringed and recaptured totals – Summerfield Nursery, 2020**

	Ringed		Recaptures
	Full grown	Nestlings	
Long-eared Owl	1		
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1		
Magpie	1		
Coal Tit	4		
Blue Tit	34	6	28
Great Tit	25		22
Long-tailed Tit	6		1
Willow Warbler	7		1
Chiffchaff	7		1
Reed Warbler	1		
Grasshopper Warbler	1		
Blackcap	2		
Lesser Whitethroat	2		
Whitethroat	39		
Goldcrest	9		9
Wren	22		8
Starling	2		
Blackbird	23		13
Redwing	2		
Song Thrush	2		1
Robin	17		26
Tree Sparrow	107	27	21
Dunnock	20		22
Chaffinch	46		5
Bullfinch	2		
Greenfinch	47		4
Linnet	1		
Goldfinch	16		1
Yellowhammer	47		1
Reed Bunting	16		
<b>Total</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>164</b>

**Acknowledgements:**

We are extremely grateful to Philip and Steph Baron for allowing us to use their premises as a study site, and for being so welcoming at all times.

# Bird ringing at Harewood Whin, 2020

By Mark Lucas and Hugh Brazier

Between 20th May and 31st December 2020 we ringed 722 birds of 30 species at Harewood Whin (using nets and potter traps in various locations), and birds were recaptured on 145 occasions, making a total of 867 encounters. 51 pulli (young birds still in the nest) were ringed and while this was down on last year (due to the impact of Coronavirus on accessibility during the breeding season), eight Reed Bunting and seven Willow Warbler chicks were ringed which was the first time they had been ringed at the site. Four of the re-trapped birds had been ringed elsewhere (two in Mark's own back garden in Acomb), so the total number of individuals caught at Harewood Whin was 726. The Little Grebes (3) were caught in nets floated on the lagoon and represent a significant total of the birds ringed in the UK. Table 1. below shows the ringed and recaptured totals for 2019 and 2020.

The range of species caught, and the relative numbers of each species, mostly seem to reflect the birds present around the landfill site and the various habitats this presents. We caught six species of warbler during the summer in 2020, of which two were first records for the site. Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat were expected. However, whilst it was apparent that Lesser Whitethroat were around (with brief sightings and hearing their call), this was the first time that they had been caught. The Grasshopper Warbler was the biggest surprise as no evidence of them being present had been recorded prior to capture. It was a lovely surprise and testament to the habitat management that these birds are visiting the area. There are a few notable absences from the catch. We saw a number of Green Sandpiper and Tufted Ducks using the lagoons and ditches throughout 2019 and 2020 but failed to catch any of either species. Fields surrounding the site have large flocks of Redwings, Fieldfares, Starlings and Linnets during the winter months, but we have failed to catch many of them either.

Records of particular note included a Willow Tit (ABP2558), ringed as an adult on 9th September 2020, which was recaptured on site on 24th December 2020. While it was only one bird, it is a real success to find one on site (a scarce bird in the area) and hopefully an indication that they are using the habitat and possibly breeding. Further evidence of the quality of habitat surrounding the site. Two recoveries further afield involved an adult male Mallard (GJ37567) ringed on 25th July 2020 which was found dead on 5th December 2020 in Whixley to the West of York and a Common Whitethroat (AYL9225) ringed as a juvenile was found 16 days later and 539km away in France (Vendes, Calvados); sadly, it had hit a window and was dead when found.

Nest records have been submitted to the BTO for more than 25 species using the site, ranging from the UK's largest bird (Mute Swan – though this was unsuccessful) to one of the smallest, the Wren. The site is a real benefit to both breeding birds and those that overwinter in and around the York area and we are

confident that more species will continue to flock here and benefit from the habitats provided.

**Table 1. Ringed and recaptured totals – Harewood Whin, 2019 and 2020**

Species	1/1/2019 - 1/12/2019		20/5/2020 - 31/12/2020		
	Ringed	Recaptures	Ringed		Recaptures
	Full-grown		Full-grown	Nestlings	
Mallard			7		1
Moorhen			4		3
Little Grebe			2	1	
Coal Tit	2		4		1
Blue Tit	19	3	61		24
Great Tit	14	4	43		3
Carrion Crow			1		
Long-tailed Tit	23	3	53		60
Willow Tit			1		1
Willow Warbler	8		14	7	1
Chiffchaff	12	1	145	20	11
Reed Warbler	1				
Grasshopper Warbler			1		
Blackcap	5		33	5	2
Whitethroat	22	2	81	5	11
Lesser Whitethroat			2		
Goldcrest	2	1	8		
Wren	9	0	39		5
Treecreeper			3		
Blackbird	6	2	13		2
Redwing			4		
Song Thrush	1		4		4
Robin	7		22		7
Tree Sparrow			1		
Dunnock	6	1	33		7
Chaffinch	1		2		
Bullfinch			8		2
Greenfinch			9		
Linnet		1	2	5	
Goldfinch		2	120		3
Reed Bunting	2		2	8	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>145</b>

**Acknowledgements:**

We are extremely grateful to Callum Duff and Dave Garnham for their help and for allowing access. We would also like to thank Ian Seddon for his help and encouragement.

# Records from the archives

## Compiled by David Tate

The following selections have been taken from previous YOC and YNU reports. Unless stated otherwise the rare bird records were accepted by the appropriate authorities.

### 25 years ago

Jim Pewtress, the editor of the 1995 YOC Report, noted that seven rare species, all reported from the LDV NNR, were bracketed in the classified list because descriptions had not been received. These records remain unsubstantiated. Killdeer was the rarest of these species and at the time it would have been a first for the YOC area and the 3rd for Yorkshire, whilst the corresponding figures for Baillon's Crane are 1st and 6th. Neither species has been reported by the YOC since 1995.

Large sections of the LDV became a National Nature Reserve in 1991 and as a result gained significant inputs of resources and staffing from English Nature. Annual rainfall totals had been low since 1988 and so there was a move to raise the water levels and maintain them well into the spring for wetland breeding birds. By 1995 the management of the reserve, aided by a period of heavier rainfall, resulted in a substantial increase in the numbers of birds requiring wetland habitats, especially at Wheldrake Ings. Breeding bird surveys produced some outstanding totals and in addition to those highlighted under 'breeding' they include:

**Ducks** – Wigeon 18 pairs; Teal 98 pairs; Pintail 9 pairs (not the 98 shown in the YOC report)

**Waders** – Lapwing 290 pairs; Snipe 240 drumming males; Curlew 97 pairs; Redshank 200 pairs

**Other** – Spotted Crane 5 calling males; Skylark 300 pairs; Meadow Pipit 330 pairs; Yellow Wagtail 65 pairs; Reed Bunting 730 pairs

Other significant records from 1995 are:

### **Rare Birds:**

**Slavonian Grebe** – one on the River Derwent at Wheldrake Ings on 7th December

**Temminck's Stint** – one at Bank Island on 16th May

**Whiskered Tern** – an adult in summer plumage at Wheldrake Ings on 29th-31st May

**Shag** – a 1st-winter at the LDV NNR on 6th March

**Nightingale** – one was singing at Wheldrake Ings CP on 20th-21st May

### Breeding:

- Black-necked Grebe** – 9 pairs raised 15 young at Wheldrake Ings
- Goshawk** – two pairs successfully bred in the LDV
- Black-headed Gull** – 2910 pairs on Wheldrake Ings
- Short-eared Owl** – pair taking food to a suitable LDV nest site in June
- Ruff** – 6 females thought to be incubating on LDV NNR in June.

### High counts:

- Pochard** – 4900 at LDV NNR on 26th February\*
- Sanderling** – 10 at the LDV NNR on 28th February
- Dunlin** – 2485 at the LDV NNR on 6th March
- Sedge Warbler** – 1360 pairs on the LDV NNR with 420 at Wheldrake Ings
- Tree Sparrow** – 320 at Melbourne on 26th September

\* The WeBS data base shows 5184 for an undated February count

At the end of the report there is an account of results from recent bird ringing in the York area. Many of the re-capture details relate to birds ringed at Wetherby and Barlow which are outside the York area. However, a Greenfinch ringed at Dringhouses, York in February 1994 was present 1148kms away near Trondheim, Norway in late May 1995.

### 50 years ago

The production of the YOC's 1970 report was delayed and this may explain why only one of the reported rarer species (*Dotterel*) was included in the YNU report. The YNU report does contain some records from the YOC area that appears to have by-passed the YOC recorder, and these are shown in italics.

1970 was the mid-point for the surveys which led to the first national atlas of breeding birds (1968-72). Some YOC members were actively involved and as a result the annual report contains records from many parts of the recording area. The only downside to this is that the records are often listed under a hectad reference and lack more precise location detail.

### Rare Birds:

- Corncrake** – *one calling at Kelfield Grange during April and May.*
- Dotterel** – three at the Flaxton part of Strensall Common on 15th May.
- Great Grey Shrike** – at a gamekeeper's gibbet, Tillmire on 24th March
- Snow Bunting** – three at Fryton, near Hovingham on 14th February.
- Lapland Bunting** – 25, with the Snow Buntings, after snow, frosts and gales.

### Breeding:

- Pintail** – a nest with 10 eggs was found on NDC by Pete Piringier.
- Turtle Dove** – 11 pairs bred on Skipwith Common.
- Nightjar** – 6 pairs successfully bred on Skipwith Common
- Kingfisher** – a family party of seven at Fulford Ings on 13th September

**Whinchat** – about 8 pairs present on Strensall Common on 21st June

**High counts:**

**Pochard** – 1100 in the LDV on 1st February.

**Bewick's Swan** – 163 in the LDV on 8th March.

**Short-eared Owl** – 4 went to cover on Heslington Tillmire on 15th March.

**Whinchat** – 20 at Cawood Ings on 20th September.

**Yellow Wagtail** – about 75 at Naburn Sewage Farm on 1st September

The number of reported Lapland Buntings is exceptional and if the identification was correct this would be the highest total ever seen at an inland site in Yorkshire. The count does not appear in the YNU report for 1995 or 'The Birds of Yorkshire' by John Mather (1986).

**100 years ago**

By 1920 Sydney Smith had returned from military service in Sierra Leone and to his former role of York District recorder. His annual report for 1920 was presented to the YNU – on 4th December and published in 'The Naturalist'. It includes:

- 20th January – a Blackbird's nest with 3 eggs seen in a greenhouse on Bishopthorpe Road, York.
- 14th March – a large flock of Golden Plover on Bootham Stray, York.
- 21st March – several Hooded Crows at Strensall.
- 2nd June – a pair of Curlews, two pairs of Redshanks and three pairs of Nightjars bred on Sandburn Common (SE6658 – now mostly woodland).
- 23rd June – a Meadow Pipit's nest at Askham Bog contained a Cuckoo's egg.
- 18th August – 3 parties of Sandpipers (presumably Common) – one of 4 and two of 5 – passed through York.

Other records which came too late for inclusion in the report were:

- 15th/16th October – a Spotted Crake died after hitting telegraph wires at Marston Station (SE511545) during the night. Presented to York Museum.
- 1st November – Mr B Hanley shot a Solitary Snipe (Great Snipe) at Bubwith on 1st November. This record does not show in the BBRC files.
- 9th November – a Red-throated Diver flew into a yard at Armoury Road, Selby on 9th November and killed itself.
- 23rd November – an exhausted Little Auk was picked up at Barnby Moor.

Sydney Smith also listed the earliest known arrival times for 22 species of migrants. Some such as Swallow and Swift were much later than they are today whilst others such as Cuckoo are much the same.



	<u>1920</u>	<u>2020</u>
Swallow	15th April	25th March
Swift	9th May	18th April
Cuckoo	9th April	6th April (10th April in 2019)

On 10th July members of the YNU visited the Kirkham area. The ornithological section was led by Smith who reported sightings of Whinchat, Redstart and Dipper, along with many other commoner species. The group searched unsuccessfully for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Pied Flycatcher which had previously bred nearby. A pair of Kestrels with young was present in the ruins of the Abbey.

In the 1921 edition of 'The Naturalist' H.B. Booth reported on the 'Nesting status of the Black-headed Gull in Yorkshire'. He noted that the largest gullery still existing in Yorkshire was at Skipwith Common where J. Morris, the local gamekeeper, estimated that between 1200 and 1300 pairs were present in 1920. A further 20 pairs were present on Bubwith Ings. These birds appeared to be '*an outcrop of the now crowded colony on Skipwith Common*' though most of the nests were drowned out by a flood. Birds were not recorded at the former gullery on Strensall Common.

Finally, the Escrick Park game book shows that 365 ducks were killed by five wildfowlers on Skipwith Common during two autumn shoots. This extraordinary total included a national morning flight record of 93 Wigeon on 22nd November. There are very few other contemporary records of ducks on the Common and so these figures do have some ornithological value.

## YOC description species (additional to BBRC/YNURC)

Brent Goose - all races	Bar-tailed Godwit	Wryneck
Tundra Bean Goose	Knot	Lesser Spotted
(Greenland) White-fronted Goose	Curlew Sandpiper	Woodpecker
Bewick's Swan	Temminck's Stint	Ring-necked Parakeet
Garganey ( <i>away from LDV</i> )	Sanderling	Great Grey Shrike
Green-winged Teal	Purple Sandpiper	Red-backed Shrike
Red-crested Pochard	Little Stint	Golden Oriole
Scaup	Pectoral Sandpiper	Hooded Crow
Eider	Red-necked Phalarope	Raven
Long-tailed Duck	Grey Phalarope	Willow Tit
Velvet Scoter	Spotted Redshank	Bearded Tit
Red-breasted Merganser	Kittiwake	Woodlark ( <i>away from the main sites</i> )
Red-throated Diver	Sabine's Gull	Shore Lark
Black-throated Diver	Little Gull	Cetti's Warbler
Great Northern Diver	Mediterranean Gull	Wood Warbler
Storm-petrel	Caspian Gull	Yellow-browed Warbler
Leach's Petrel	Yellow-legged Gull	Barred Warbler
Fulmar	Little Tern	Firecrest
Manx Shearwater	Black Tern	Ring Ouzel
Red-necked Grebe	Sandwich Tern	Nightingale
Slavonian Grebe	Roseate Tern	Pied Flycatcher
Black-necked Grebe	Arctic Tern	Red-breasted Flycatcher
White Stork	Pomarine Skua	Black Redstart
Spoonbill	Arctic Skua	Dipper
Bittern	Great Skua	Yellow Wagtail
Great White Egret	Long-tailed Skua	( <i>'Blue-headed' race and 'Channel' hybrid</i> )
Gannet	Little Auk	Richard's Pipit
Shag	Razorbill	Water Pipit *
Osprey	Guillemot	Rock Pipit *
Goshawk*	Puffin	Hawfinch
Hen Harrier	Turtle Dove	Twite
Spotted Crake	Long-eared Owl	Common (Mealy) Redpoll
Corncrake	Short-eared Owl	Lapland Bunting
Crane	Nightjar	Snow Bunting
Stone Curlew	Bee-eater	
Dotterel	Hoopoe	

\* For species marked with an asterisk, acceptance is only likely with a good photograph or video, which will enable elimination of similar species.

## 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 subspecies or birds of dubious origin. Rare and scarce species at national, county and local levels are marked in the list with three, two or one asterisks as follows: \*\*\* British Birds Rarities Committee (BBRC), \*\* Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Rarities Committee (YNURC), \* YOC Recorder.

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| * Brent Goose         | * Long-tailed Duck       |
| Canada Goose B        | Common Scoter            |
| Barnacle Goose        | * Velvet Scoter          |
| Greylag Goose B       | Goldeneye W              |
| ** Taiga Bean Goose W | Smew                     |
| Pink-footed Goose P   | Goosander (B)            |
| * Tundra Bean Goose W | * Red-breasted Merganser |
| * White-fronted Goose | Ruddy Duck               |
| Mute Swan B           | Red-legged Partridge B   |
| * Bewick's Swan W     | Grey Partridge B         |
| Whooper Swan W        | Quail (B)                |
| Egyptian Goose B      | Pheasant B               |
| (Ruddy Shelduck)      | (Golden Pheasant)        |
| Shelduck B            | * Red-throated Diver     |
| Mandarin Duck B       | * Black-throated Diver   |
| * Garganey B          | * Great Northern Diver   |
| *** Blue-winged Teal  | * Storm-petrel           |
| Shoveler B            | * Leach's Petrel         |
| Gadwall B             | * Fulmar                 |
| Wigeon (B)            | * Manx Shearwater        |
| ** American Wigeon    | Little Grebe B           |
| Mallard B             | * Red-necked Grebe       |
| Pintail (B)           | Great Crested Grebe B    |
| Teal B                | * Slavonian Grebe        |
| * Green-winged Teal   | * Black-necked Grebe (B) |
| * Red-crested Pochard | *** Black Stork          |
| Pochard (B)           | * White Stork            |
| Ring-necked Duck      | ** Glossy Ibis           |
| *** Ferruginous Duck  | * Spoonbill              |
| Tufted Duck B         | * Bittern                |
| * Scaup               | ** Cattle Egret          |
| * Eider               | Grey Heron B             |

- \*\* Purple Heron
- \* Great White Egret
- Little Egret B
- \* Gannet
- \* Shag
- Cormorant B
- \* Osprey P
- \*\* Honey Buzzard
- Sparrowhawk B
- \* Goshawk B
- Marsh Harrier (B)
- \* Hen Harrier
- \*\* Montagu's Harrier
- Red Kite (B)
- \*\* White-tailed Eagle
- \*\* Black Kite
- \*\* Rough-legged Buzzard
- Buzzard B
- Water Rail B
- \* Spotted Crake (B)
- \* Corncrake (B)
- Moorhen B
- Coot B
- \* Crane
- \* Stone Curlew
- Oystercatcher B
- \*\* Black-winged Stilt
- Avocet
- Lapwing B
- Golden Plover W
- \*\* American Golden Plover
- Grey Plover
- Ringed Plover B
- Little Ringed Plover B
- \*\* Kentish Plover
- Dotterel
- Whimbrel P
- Curlew B
- \* Bar-tailed Godwit
- Black-tailed Godwit (B)
- \* Turnstone
- \* Knot
- Ruff (B)
- \* Curlew Sandpiper
- \* Temminck's Stint
- \* Sanderling
- Dunlin W & P
- \* Little Stint P
- \*\* White-rumped Sandpiper
- \*\* Buff-breasted Sandpiper
- \* Pectoral Sandpiper
- Woodcock B
- Jack Snipe W
- Snipe B
- \* Red-necked Phalarope
- \* Grey Phalarope
- Common Sandpiper
- Green Sandpiper P & W
- \*\* Lesser Yellowlegs
- Redshank B
- Wood Sandpiper P
- \* Spotted Redshank P
- Greenshank P
- \* Kittiwake
- \* Sabine's Gull
- Black-headed Gull B
- \* Little Gull
- \*\*\* Franklin's Gull
- \* Mediterranean Gull
- Common Gull W & P
- \*\* Ring-billed Gull
- Great Black-backed Gull W
- Glaucous Gull
- Iceland Gull W
- \*\* (Kumlien's Gull)
- Herring Gull W, P & B
- \* Caspian Gull
- Yellow-legged Gull
- Lesser Black-backed Gull S & P
- \*\* Caspian Tern
- \* Sandwich Tern
- \* Little Tern

- \* Roseate Tern
- Common Tern B
- \* Arctic Tern P
- \*\*\* Whiskered Tern
- \*\* White-winged Black Tern
- \* Black Tern
- \* Great Skua
- \* Arctic Skua
- \* Pomarine Skua
- \* Little Auk
- \* Guillemot
- \* Puffin
- 'Feral Pigeon' B
- Stock Dove B
- Woodpigeon B
- \* Turtle Dove B
- Collared Dove B
- Cuckoo B
- Barn Owl B
- Tawny Owl B
- Little Owl B
- \* Long-eared Owl B
- \* Short-eared Owl (B)
- \* Nightjar B
- Swift B
- \*\* Alpine Swift
- Kingfisher B
- \* Bee-eater
- \* Hoopoe
- \* Wryneck
- \* Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (B)
- Great Spotted Woodpecker B
- Green Woodpecker B
- Kestrel B
- \*\* Red-footed Falcon
- Merlin
- Hobby (B)
- Peregrine B
- \* (Ring-necked Parakeet) (B)
- \* Red-backed Shrike
- \*\*\* Lesser Grey Shrike
- \* Great Grey Shrike
- \* Golden Oriole
- Jay B
- Magpie B
- Jackdaw B
- Rook B
- Carrion Crow B
- \* Hooded Crow
- \* Raven
- Waxwing W
- Coal Tit B
- Marsh Tit B
- \* Willow Tit B
- Blue Tit B
- Great 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
- Willow Warbler B
- Chiffchaff B
- \*\* (Siberian Chiffchaff)
- \* Wood Warbler
- \* Yellow-browed Warbler
- Sedge Warbler B
- Reed Warbler B
- \*\* Marsh Warbler
- Grasshopper Warbler B
- Blackcap B
- Garden Warbler B
- \* Barred Warbler
- Lesser Whitethroat B
- Whitethroat B
- \* Firecrest
- Goldcrest B
- Wren B

- Nuthatch B
- Treecreeper B
- \*\* Rose-coloured Starling
- Starling B
- \* Ring Ouzel
- Blackbird B
- Fieldfare W & P
- Redwing W & P
- Song Thrush B, W & P
- Mistle Thrush B
- Spotted Flycatcher B
- Robin B
- \* Nightingale (B)
- \* Pied Flycatcher (B)
- \* Red-breasted Flycatcher
- \* Black Redstart (B)
- Redstart B
- Whinchat P
- Stonechat B
- Wheatear P
- Dipper (B)
- House Sparrow B
- Tree Sparrow B
- Duncock B
- Yellow Wagtail B
- \* (Blue-headed Wagtail)
- Grey Wagtail B
- Pied Wagtail B
- (White Wagtail)
- \* Richard's Pipit
- Meadow Pipit B
- Tree Pipit B
- \* Water Pipit
- \* Rock Pipit P
- Chaffinch B
- Brambling W
- \* Hawfinch
- Bullfinch B
- \* Common Rosefinch
- Greenfinch B
- \* Twite
- Linnet B
- \* Common (Mealy) Redpoll
- Lesser Redpoll (B)
- \*\*\* Arctic Redpoll
- \*\*\* 'Coues's' Arctic Redpoll
- Crossbill B
- Goldfinch B
- Siskin (B)
- Corn Bunting B
- Yellowhammer B
- \*\*\* Pine Bunting
- \*\* Cirl Bunting
- Reed Bunting B
- \* Lapland Bunting
- \* Snow Bunting

# Contributors to the 2020 Report

(With apologies for any accidental omissions)

P Abbott	S Caudwell (SC)	J Fryer
P Adams	Jane Chapman (JCn)	Peter Gannon
Ian Andrews (IA)	Rob Chapman (RCn)	Sean Garvey
G F Appleton	S Churchill	Elaine Gathercole
A Archer	Mark Coates (MC)	Simon Gathercole
Les Arkless	S N Collins	Keith Gittens
Jack Ashton-Booth (JA-B)	S Connolly	J Glendinning
I A Ashworth (IAA)	M Cookson	Tim Godson
Mary Atkins	Derek Cooper (DCo)	Chris Gomersall (CG)
Richard Baines (RB)	Neil Cooper (NC)	A Gomez
Sue Ball	M Cottingham	Steve Griffiths
Mandy Barber (MB)	Bob Coursey (RCo)	P Haigh
Claire Barker-Wyatt	Adam Craske	K D Hall
B Barrett	D Craven	Kit Hamilton
Robert Barrett (RBa)	Doug Crawford	Jon Hardacre
R I Bashford	Claire Crocker	David Harradine
Colin Beale (CB)	Pat Crofton (PC)	I R Hartley
D Beevers	N Curran	Paul Henderson
Jonathan Begbie (JB)	Robert Dawson	Chris Heppell
C Bill	Nick David	J Highton
Barry Bishop (BB)	J G Davies (JD)	Neil Hildreth
Nigel Boatman	Angela de Muynck	Jon Hill
Barbara Boize (BBo)	D F Dickinson	P Hogg
Phil Bone (PB)	John Diley	Andy Hood
Jez Bowser	Jenny Dixon	Richard Horsman
Margaret Boyd	Mike Dixon	R Hoskin (RH)
Hugh Brazier	Catherine Djimramadji	Adrian Hotson (AHo)
John Breckon	Paul Doherty (PD)	S J Huddleston
Paul Brook	J M & C Dowson	Richard Hudson
Dean Brookes	C Doyle	Brian Hughes
Ian Brookes	Claire Dyson (CD)	D Humphries
D Booth	M Eaton	S Hunter
Adrian Brougham	Suzanne Edwards	R Hunton
David Brown	Ben Egron-Reverseau (BE)	N Hurst
M Brown	Simon Elliott (SE)	Adam Hutt (AH)
Tom Broxup (TBr)	S C Elliott	Josh Hutt
Jim Bryce (JBr)	S T Elliott	A Huyton
Emanuela Buizza	Anneliese Emmans Dean	J B Ingham
James Burton	Jonathan Evans	P Izzard
Jamie Butler	Steve Farley	Jarred Johnson
Tim Burkinshaw (TB)	C Farrell	Lee Johnson
Barry Byatt	M Fewster (MF)	B Jones
Duncan Bye (DMB)	Adam Firth (AF)	Tim Jones (TJ)
Deb Cammish	Gary Flakes	Paul Kennedy
Gerry Capelin (GC)	Wendy Flakes	Timothy Key
N Carter (NCa)	Paul (Paz) Fletcher (PF)	David King
P M Carter	M J Flowers	James Konefal
T Carger	James Forster	Anne-Marie Lawn
Philippa Carr	Tony Fothergill	Tom & Julia Lawson

John Lawton (JL)  
Helen Lay  
Jono Leadley (JLe)  
Nicola Lefanu (NL)  
A Leggett (AL)  
Adrian Levitt  
P & S A Leyland  
K Limb  
Anne & Chris Lloyd  
Mark Lucas  
Jonathan Lunt  
Peter Lyons (PL)  
Tim Mackrill  
Chris Marshall  
P Maugham  
S McAvoy  
David McBeth  
I McGeorge  
A McDonald  
Peter Mayhew  
Oliver Metcalf  
H Milburn  
Lucy Mitchell  
Neil & Elizabeth N Moran  
Nick Moran  
Phil Moss (PMo)  
Phil Mountain (PM)  
Michael Naylor  
Sue & David Needham  
Martin Nettleton  
Paul Newton  
J P Nicholson (JN)  
Jan Nobel (JNo)  
Greg Norman  
R North  
Rebecca Norville  
Peter O'Toole (POT)  
G Osborn  
Lewis Outing  
D Owen  
Alice Palmer  
Amanda Parker  
Naomi Parkin  
Haydn Pattinson (HP)  
J Pemberton  
Brian Pepper  
Robin & Sue Perutz  
Michael Plevin  
Jonathan Pomroy (JP)  
A Porter  
C Proffitt  
Christy Ralph (CR)  
John Rawcliffe  
P Rawnsley

A Reaney  
Peter Reed (PR)  
G S Reid (GR)  
Jim Reid (JRe)  
Penny Relf (PRf)  
Liz & Keith Reynolds  
David Renwick  
Dave Richardson (DR)  
Malcolm Richardson  
Peter Richman  
M Rowell  
Barbara Roberts  
Jennifer Roberts (JRo)  
Sara Robin  
J Robson (JR)  
D W G Rothwell  
Mark Rowbottom  
Craig Sandham  
M Scarborough  
Andrew Schofield (ASc)  
P Scholes  
Maria Scullion (MSc)  
Helen Searstone  
Joe Seymour (JS)  
Josh Sherwin  
G Short  
Freya Sierhuis  
Graham Sigsworth  
Masha Sitnikova (MS)  
Andrew Smith  
Gill Smith (GS)  
Mike Smith  
M S Smith  
Darren Starkey (DS)  
L D Stead (LS)  
Jen Stopford  
C Storton (CS)  
R Strong  
D Sulway  
Kerry Sutton-Spence  
Alan Swain (ASw)  
R W Swift  
H M Tanner (HT)  
David Tate (DT)  
Kim Taylor  
Barry Thomas  
Jane Thomas  
Valerie Thomas (VT)  
Richard Thomlinson  
Simon Tonge  
C Toop (CT)  
Ian Traynor (IT)  
John Troughton  
James Wainwright

Susan Wainwright (SW)  
C Walker  
Geoff Wallis (GWA)  
David Walsh (DWa)  
J Walsh (JW)  
Susan Walsh (SWa)  
Fiona Walton (FW)  
Mike Walton  
Trevor Walton (TWN)  
Caroline Ward  
Tim Ward (TWA)  
Steve Wadsworth  
George Watola (GW)  
Peter Watson (PW)  
Dave Waudby (DW)  
Steve Waudby  
Christine Weaver  
Martin Weir  
Jonathan Wells  
Terry Weston (TW)  
Alan Whitehead (AWH)  
Dick Whittington  
J Wild  
P Wilkins  
John Wilkinson  
Mark Williams  
T Wilson  
Judith Wilson  
Mark Windmill (MW)  
D H Woodmansey  
Anthony Wooton  
Alison Young  
  
BirdGuides  
eBird  
LDV Blog  
Natural England (NE)  
North Yorkshire Bird News (NYBN)  
North Yorkshire Turtle Dove Project (NYTDP)  
University of York Ringing Group Report (UoYRG)  
YOC Website reports  
@Yorkbirding  
@York Peregrines  
  
**The LDV team comprises:**  
Craig Ralston (CSR)  
Mike Jackson (MFJ)  
Steve Huddleston (SH)  
Lucy Murgatroyd (LM)  
Fallon Mahon (FM)  
Jean Thorpe (JT)  
George Day (GD)



## 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	Brockfield	664553
Acaster Selby	574415	Broomhill Plantation	703449
Acomb, York	5751	Brumber Hill	535430
Allerthorpe Common	7547	Bubwith Bridge	705364
Allerthorpe OGP	7947	Bubwith Ings	7037
Ampleforth	583787	Bugthorpe	773579
Anchor Plain, Strensall	6363	Buttercrambe	733582
Appleton Roebuck	555423	Butterwick	732775
Arglam	783359	Byland Abbey	549790
Askham Bog(s)	5748	<b>C</b>	
Askham Bryan	552485	Cali Heath NR	753498
Aughton	7038	Canal Head, Pocklington	798474
Aughton Ings	6938	Carlton Husthwaite Flash	5176
<b>B</b>		Castle Howard Lake (CHL)	7170
Bank Island	695452	Cawood	573377
Barmby Moor	776490	Cawton	643767
Barthorpe	774598	Church Fenton	515370
Barton-le-Willows	715632	Church Bridge, Melbourne	759445
Beningbrough	529578	Claxton	694602
Beningbrough Hall	516586	Cliffe	662320
Bielby	789437	Cliffe Common	666339
Biggin	544349	Clifton	593532
Bilbrough	532468	Clifton Backies NR, York	596540
Bishophorpe	5947	Clifton Ings	583531
Bishop Wilton	797553	Clifton Park	584533
Bishop Wood	5533	Coates Bridge, Pock. Canal	785453
Bolton Percy Ings	537397	Coneysthorpe	713713
Bolton Percy	532414	Coneysthorpe Banks Wood	720725
Bootham Stray, York	597548	Copmanthorpe	565469
Bossall	719607	Cornfield NR, Rawcliffe	579542
Brandsby	589724	Coxwold	536772
Brayton	601305	Crambe	733649
Brayton Barff	5830	Crambeck	738674
Brecks (The), Strensall	648618	Crayke	562705
Breighton	709341		

<b>D</b>	
Deighton	624438
Derwenthorpe, York	630519
Designer Outlet, York	607477
Dringhouses, York	580495
Dunnington	671525
Dunnington Common	6750
<b>E</b>	
Easingwold	529698
East Cottingwith	703425
East Cottingwith Ings	697415
Easthorpe, (Upper Poppleton)	5355
East Moor, Sutton-on-the-Forest	600644
Eastrington Ponds LNR	785300
Ellerton	704398
Ellerton Ings	696395
Ellerton Landing	679403
Elvington	700476
Elvington Airfield	670480
Elvington WTW	7048
Escrick	631427
Escrick Park	635418
<b>F</b>	
Fangfoss	765533
Fireman's Leap, New Earswick	609550
Flamingoland	7780
Flaxton	680624
Foggathorpe	755377
Foss Island, York	609520
Fulford, York	610496
Fulford Ings	608493
Fulford Golf Course	624494
Fulford Hall	606484
Full Sutton	746555
<b>G</b>	
Ganthorpe	689704
Garrowby Hill	798567
Gaterley	737696
Giles Lock, Pocklington Canal	795464
Gilling (East/Park)	614770
Goosewood Caravan Park, Sutton-on-the-Forest	591631
Great Barugh	750790
Grimston	644514
Grimston Bar (roundabout)	649516
Grimston Moor	613744

<b>H</b>	
Hagg Bridge	717452
Harewood Whin (Rufforth Tip)	538518
Hassacarr NR	673518
Haxby	609582
Healalough	500477
Hemingbrough	6730
Heslington	627504
Heslington East, York Uni.	6350 - 6450
Heslington Tillmire	638475
Heslington West, York Uni.	6250
Hessay	524534
Heworth	618529
High Catton	718538
High Hutton	755685
High Lodge, SHL	675586
High Plumps Wood, SHL	671584
Hob Moor, York	585506
Hogg's Pond, Dringhouses	581493
Hollicarrs	626395
Holtby	675542
Hopgrove (roundabout)	642553
Hovingham	667758
Howardian Hills	5875 - 7568
Huby	566655
Hull Road Park, York	620515
Huntington, York	612550
Huttons Ambo	763677
<b>J</b>	
Jeffry Bog, Low Hutton	759667
JRTNR, New Earswick	608548
<b>K</b>	
Kelfield	594384
Kexby	705514
Kilburn	504796
Kirby Misperton	780794
Kirkby Wharfe	506409
Kirkham Priory	736658
Knapton	562522
Knavesmire, York	594495
Knavesmire Wood, York	593488
<b>L</b>	
Langwith Stray, Heslington	650480
Laytham	749395

Londesborough Lodge Farm	
Dunnington	6952
Long Marston	502512
Low Carr, Sutton-on-the-Forest	600623
Low Catton	705538
Lower Derwent Valley	7036 -
	7046
Low Grounds, by Wheldrake Ings	703444
<b>M</b>	
Malton	785717
Mausoleum, Castle Howard	727696
Melbourne	753441
Meltonby	796525
Menthorpe	700346
Middlethorpe Ings	603486
Milford Common	5332
Millennium Bridge, York	603497
Monks Cross, York	630550
Moor Lane, Bishopthorpe	585470
Moor Monkton	506569
Moorlands NR	577588
Moreby Wood	606428
Murton	650527
<b>N</b>	
Naburn	599455
Naburn Bridge	598467
Naburn Ings	593449
Naburn Marina	599462
Naburn Wood	6043
Nether Poppleton	560549
Newburgh Priory (lake)	542767
Newhay	661307
Newton-on-Ouse	512599
Newton Carr	740494
Newton Mask SSSI	705501
Newton upon Derwent	720495
New Earswick	609555
North Duffield Carrs (NDC)	695375
North Duffield Ings	707359
North Howden	7530
Norton-on-Derwent	795710
Nunnington (Hall)	667794
Nursery Wood, SHL	678585
<b>O</b>	
Osbalwick	633519
Osgodby	641338

Oswaldkirk	625790
Oulston Reservoir	570745
Overton	554557
Oxton	505431
Ozendyke Ings	539398
<b>P</b>	
Parliament Street, York	603518
Patefield Wood	500381
Petersfield Farm, Bielby	793422
Pocklington	802490
Pocklington Airfield	793485
Pocklington Canal	698426
	-800474
Poppleton	560546
Pretty Wood, Castle Howard	732690
<b>R</b>	
Raker Lakes, Wheldrake	684463
Rawcliffe Country Park	577547
Rawcliffe Ings	575544
Rawcliffe Lake	586546
Rawcliffe Meadows	577545
Redhouse Lagoon/Reservoir	529575
Redhouse Wood, Moor Monkton	520570
Refuge, Wheldrake	708435
Riccall	620380
Rossmoor Park	722436
Rowntree Park, York	604508
Ruddins Ings	5456
Rufforth	5251
Ryther	550392
Ryther Ings	551389
Ryton	795757
Ryton Bridge (Riggs Rd Bridge)	796754
<b>S</b>	
Sand Hutton	695586
Scackleton	650726
Scagglethorpe Moor/Lane	5355
Scamlands (Melbourne)	766439
Scoreby Lodge	684513
Scrayingham	731601
Seaton Ross	780415
Seavy Carr, Thornton	753451
Selby	615324
Sessions NR, New Earswick	610548
Sheriff Hutton	655664
Sherburn in Elmet	500330

Silburn Lock, Pock. Canal	797468
Skewsby	625710
Skipwith	657385
Skipwith Common	6537
Skirpenbeck	747570
Slingsby	698750
Slingsby Banks Wood	698733
South Duffield	681335
Spaldington	759335
Stamford Bridge	715555
Stearsby Hagg	620720
Stillingfleet	594410
Stillington	585678
Stittenham	679677
Stockton on the Forest	655561
Stonegrave	657777
Storwood	712442
Strensall	633608
Strensall Common	6460 -
	6661
St Nicholas Fields, York	615517
Stubb Wood	585433
Sutton-on-the-Forest	584647
Sutton upon Derwent	707468
Swinton	760731
Swinton Ings	772748
<b>T</b>	
Tang Hall Beck fields	6353
Tang Hall, York	620520
Terrington	670707
Terrington Moor	685716
The Retreat, York	617510
The Stank, near Sand Hutton	687577
Thorganby	691420
Thorganby Ings	6941
Thornton	760453
Thornton Ellers	730460
Tollerton	513643
Towthorpe	625586
Towthorpe Civic Amenity Site	648586
Towthorpe Moor Lane, Strensall	625585
	-663579
Triangle Meadow, York	604547
<b>U</b>	
Ulleskelf	520400
Upper Poppleton	5554

<b>W</b>	
Walbut Lock, Pock. Canal	773442
Walbutts WTW, Strensall	646618
Walmgate Stray, York	617505
Waplinton Hall, Allerthorpe	776468
Warren Wood, Dunnington	677503
Warthill	675555
Wash Dike, Skipwith Common	662372
Wass Woods	550796
Welburn	720680
Welburn Sewage Works	714685
West Bank Park, York	584512
West Cottingwith Ings	695419
West Ings	550394
West Lilling	648652
West Ness	690790
Westow	7565
Wharfe Ings	568387
Wheldrake	682450
Wheldrake Ings	7043
Wheldrake Wood	6546
Whenby	629698
Whitehill Mine	667359
White Carr, Flaxton	663603
Whitwell Grange	715666
Wiganthorpe	662724
Wigginton	595585
Wilberfoss	734510
Winchmore, Stamford Bridge	727547
Wistow	594357
Woodhouse Grange	733470
World's End Plantation,	
Strensall Common	6659
Wressle	708313
<b>Y</b>	
Yearsley	585744
Yearsley Moor	5875 -
	6076
York (city centre)	599519
York Minster	603523
Yorkshire Arboretum	705697