

Alkborough Flats Annual Bird and wildlife Report 2024

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Introduction:

2024 marked the 18th year of bird recording at the Alkborough Flats managed realignment site.

This report mainly concerns the occurrence of bird species but a section following the bird list summarises the observations of mammals, butterflies, dragonflies and other wildlife noted during the year.

In 2024 there were no breeding bird surveys or late winter bird surveys and thus the contents of this report are less complete than in recent years but details of some of the key breeding species are still included.

Only one new species was recorded from the Flats in 2024 a very brief Gull-billed Tern on June 14th. Marsh Harriers had another disastrous breeding season, two in succession, with five of seven nests failing and only five young fledging but Water Rails and Bearded Tits appeared to continue to prosper from the ever expanding reedbeds.

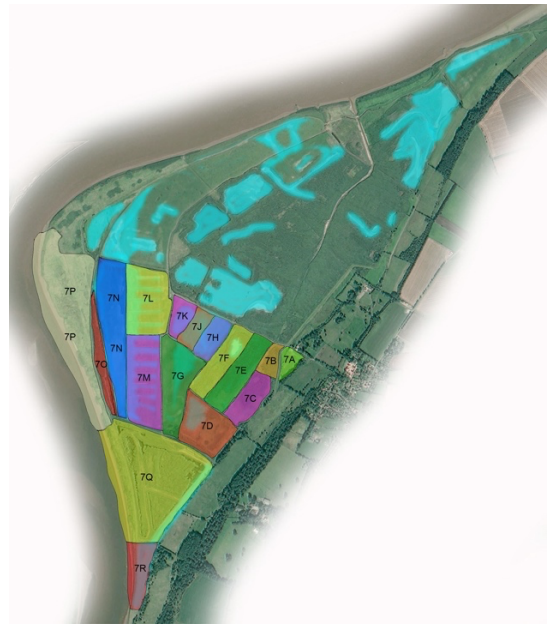
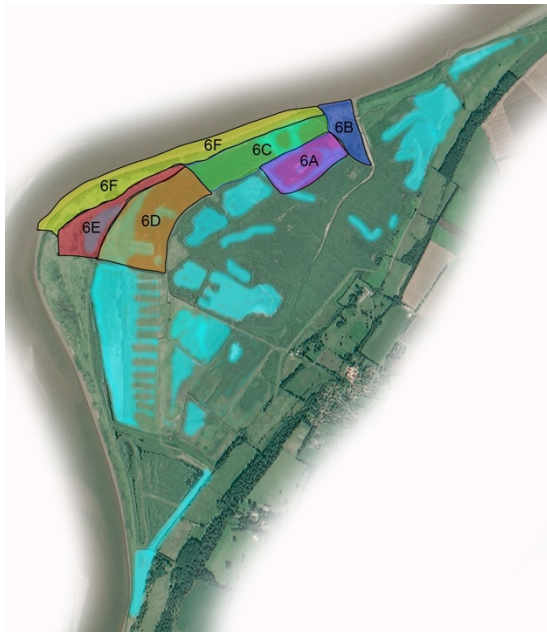
With the overall loss of mud many wader species continued to decline in numbers particularly Avocet, Spotted Redshank and Curlew though the latter species appears to be showing responses to international declines.

Graham Catley
January 2025

All photographs in the following report were taken at Alkborough Flats in 2024 and are © Graham Catley unless stated otherwise

The maps below delineate the site into surveyed areas mentioned in the texts that follow.







Areas 6 and 7 March 20th 2024



Area 4 and 7 April 2024



Areas 6 and 7 April 10th 2024



Areas 4 and 6 behind January 2024



Area 7 and 6 January 2024



Field 7 K January 2024



Field 7M January 2024



Field 7G January 2024



Fields 7L, 7M and 7N January 2024



Area 6 and 4 April 2024



Area 7 April 10th 2024



Central track Area 7 April 2024



Main access track April 10th 2024



Trent Foreshore April 10th 2024



Area 7 April 17th 2024



Area 7 looking to Blacktoft April 17th 2024



Looking to Trent hide April 17th 2024



Dead copse and the breach April 17th 2024



Area 8 April 22nd 2024



Main inundation reedbed April 22nd 2024



Inundation reedbed and fields in Area 6 in background April 22nd 2024



Remaining pool in Area 4 April 22nd 2024



Dead wood and main reedbed April 22nd 2024



Area 7 May 5th 2024



Area 4 and Area 6 fields in background May 5th 2024



Former grass fields in Area 7 May 2024



Trent Flash August 30th 2024





Inundation reedbed August 2024



Dead copse and inundation reedbed August 2024





Cattle grazing reed in Area 1 September 2024



Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Up to 30 birds were present in the early winter with c9 pairs nesting but although several broods hatched some died quickly and most of the remaining broods succumbed to the desiccation of the pools before the young could fledge in August. A major arrival of immature birds occurred in May with 80 on the 1st and a peak of 100 from 10th to June 3rd eclipsed by a count of 120 on June 9th after which there were 80 on July 18th but then most of the birds started to disperse as the site began to dry out. Less than 20 birds present in the latter part of the year.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

A few birds were in the area in January – February peaking at 12 in February 4th before the first spring passage flocks appeared in early March with 23 on the 9th. It was not a record spring but 44 on March 26th and 70 on the Humber on April 1st were followed by 37 moving north on 13th and one lingered from April 21st to May 21st. The first two of the autumn were seen on October 4th with 10 south on 7th and 25 on the 8th but the big day was 11th with a total of 205 birds passing southwards during the day. Small parties were then fairly regular with a good count of 62 on October 27th and there were 80 in the area on November 11th with 20 arriving from the north and resting on the Trent Flash for a while before joining a flock of 60 that had been feeding across the Trent. Up to 32 were feeding west of the Trent and loafing on the Trent in December.



Whooper Swans moving north March 26th 2024



Whooper Swans and one Mute Swan Trent Flash November 2024

Tundra Bean Goose *Anser serrirostris*

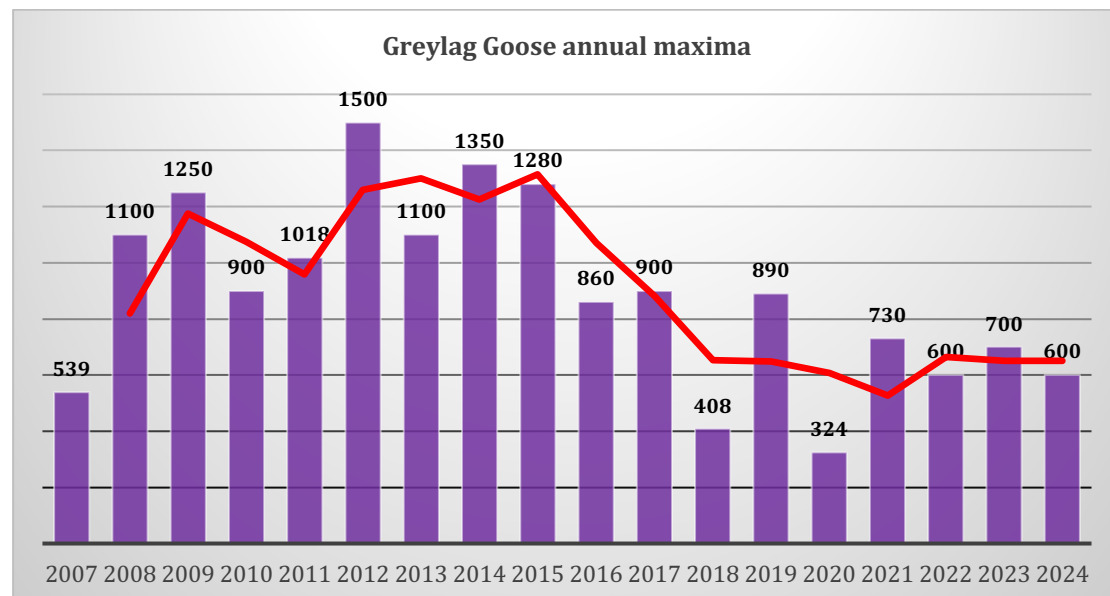
An unseasonal bird was with the local Greylag flock from May 18th – 22nd all previous records fell in the recognised winter occurrence period.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

A few flocks occasionally fed for restricted periods on the Humber pastures in both winter periods but there was no regular use of the site for feeding in either winter period. The last of the spring was seen on April 20th, an injured bird and the first of the autumn were 29 on the early date of September 8th. The Humber birds were more concentrated in the middle reaches around Redcliffe Middle Sand in October and November and hence fewer birds passed over the site from the Whitton roost but a feeding flock built up across the Trent in November and up to 2500 birds again roosted on the Trent Flash and Trent Sand Bar in mid-month prior to the freeze on 19th – 22nd.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

The annual peak seems to have stabilised in recent years but occurrences on the Flats have become more sporadic and seasonal. At least 12 broods hatched and c37 young fledged. In the early winter January – March the peak count was only 159 birds but 260 gathered in mid-summer on June 14th with the annual peak of 600 from August 9th – 15th when they were loafing on the Trent Flash and feeding on arable fields to the west of the Trent.

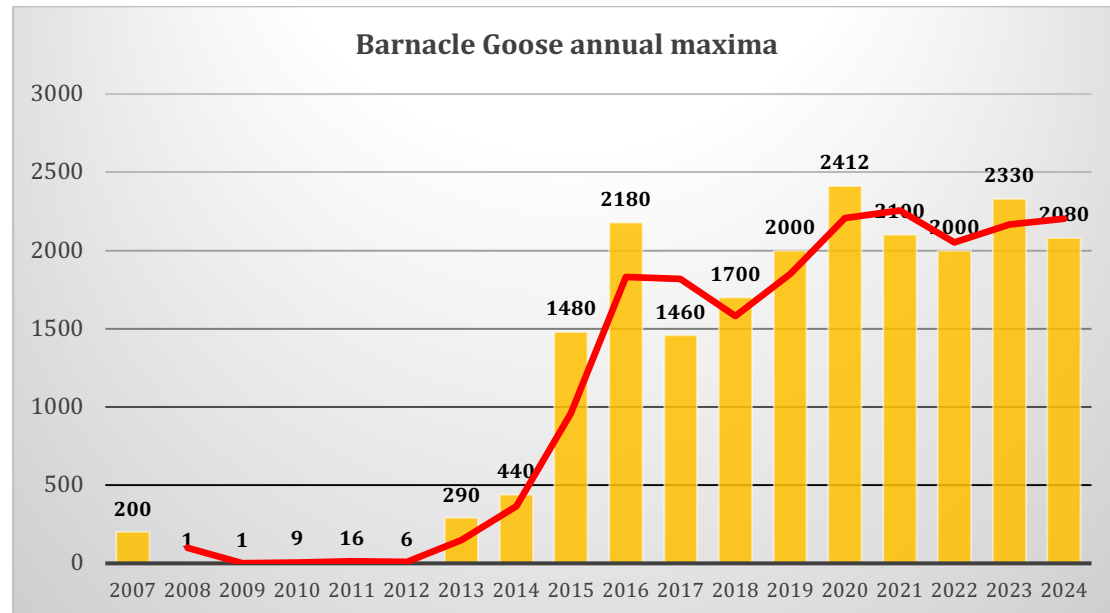


Greylag Geese Area 6 October 2024

Greater Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

No more than 14 birds in the early winter but breeding was proven for the first time with two clutches hatching but none of the young survived. More regular from the late autumn on the Humber pastures with a peak of 145 on November 11th.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*



The year's peak count of 2080 was logged on January 4th with 1710 on February 1st and 1376 on March 5th being the highest totals in the first winter period. From April 10th – 14th around 1340 birds were regular with 90 on May 5th probably due to a breeding season failure on Whitton Sands. Ten neck collared birds present in late January were all from the ringing scheme in North Yorkshire and all had wintered in southern England. One bird had been recorded at Alkborough Flats in February 2023 but none of the others returned though one had been seen at East Halton Pits in February 2023. Following the breeding season failures 250 birds were on the Flats on June 14th after which there was a gap in sightings until late October when 540 were present on 22nd with less than 50 on dates to late November but up to 800 in December.



Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*

Singles on January 9th and November 30th were the only records.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Two roosted overnight on the Flats from September 22nd to at least October 9th but were never seen in daytime.

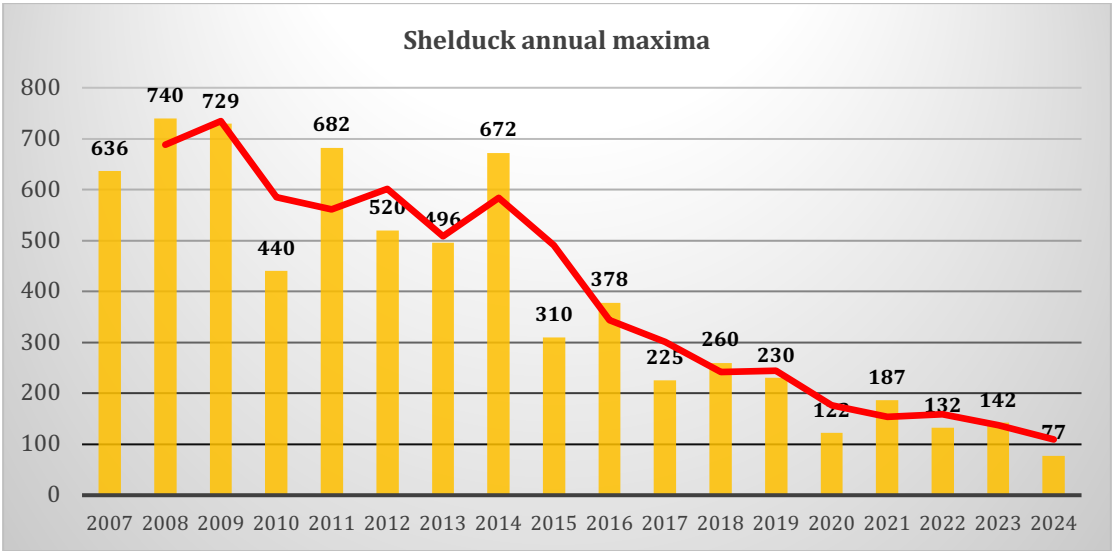
Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

One or two were regular between June 2nd and July 6th with two again on August 15th.



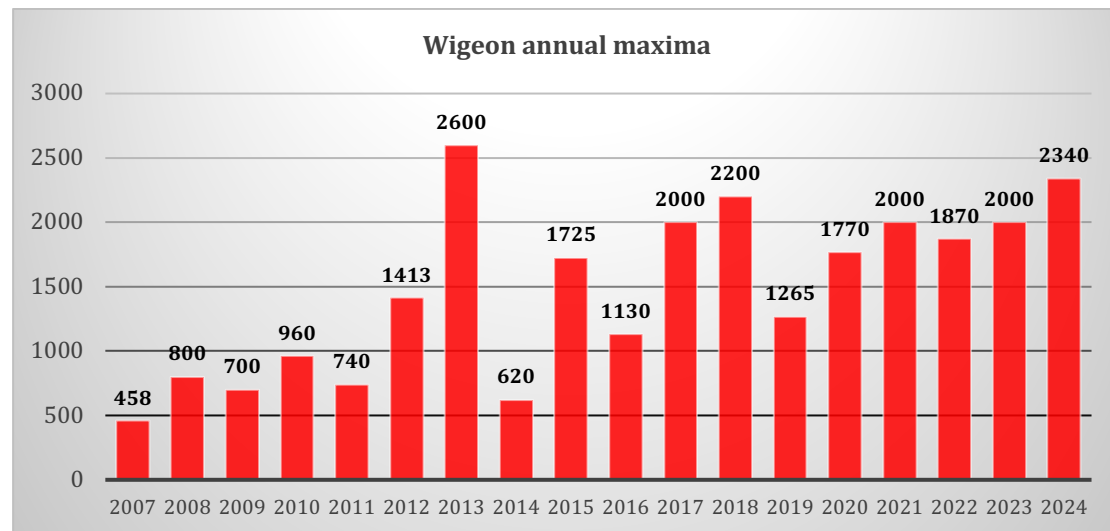
Egyptian Goose June 2024

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*



No more than 27 Shelducks were seen in both winter periods but the flooded grass fields attracted a few more birds in the spring with numbers rising from 38 on March 19th to 58 by April 17th and peaking at 77 from May 2nd – 21st. None were present in June or July with one juvenile on August 4th then up to 12 from mid-October mainly in Area 4 until it froze in November but 38 again in December.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*



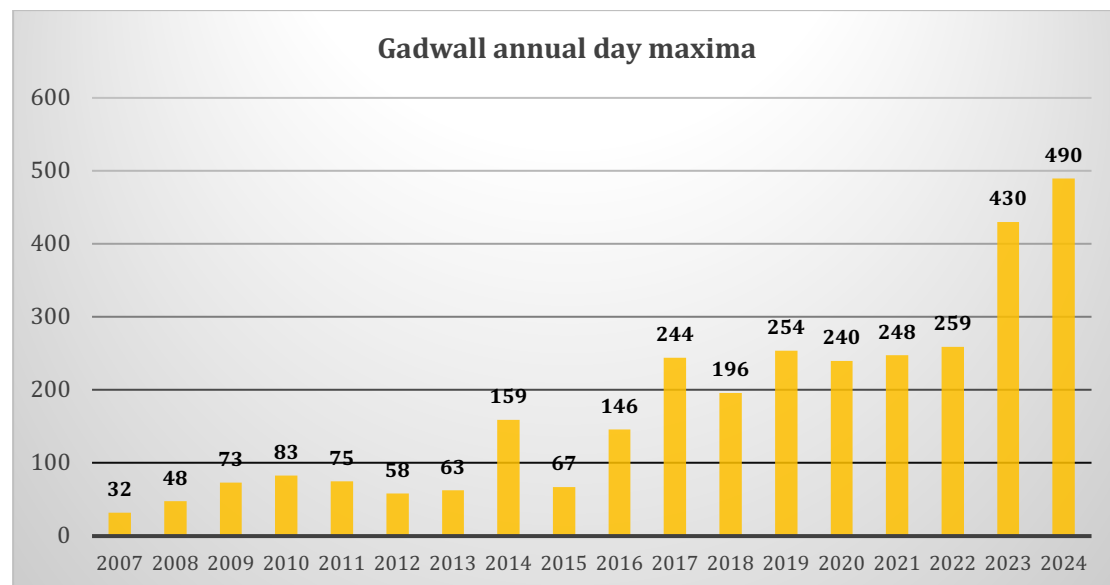
The second highest ever count of Wigeon was logged in late February with the majority of the birds feeding on the flooded fields by the Trent Flash and loafing in the Trent Flash itself. The only higher count was made just after the tidal surge in December 2013 and there has been a slow but steady increase in winter numbers over the last six years demonstrating the increasing suitability of the wet grass fields for this species but also the increasing acceptance of people on adjacent paths by feeding birds. A colour ringed male seen on March 2nd had been ringed at Wheldrake on the Lower Derwent in November 2021 demonstrating high site fidelity. Most birds departed by the end of March but there were still 260 on April 1st and 190 on 10th with varying numbers of up to 14 birds during May rising to 20 on June 17th as failed breeders returned. Up to 27 birds were seen in July and 14 in August but it was early November before any substantial arrivals occurred with 800 counted on 5th.



Wigeon feeding and loafing February 2024



Gadwall *Anas strepera*

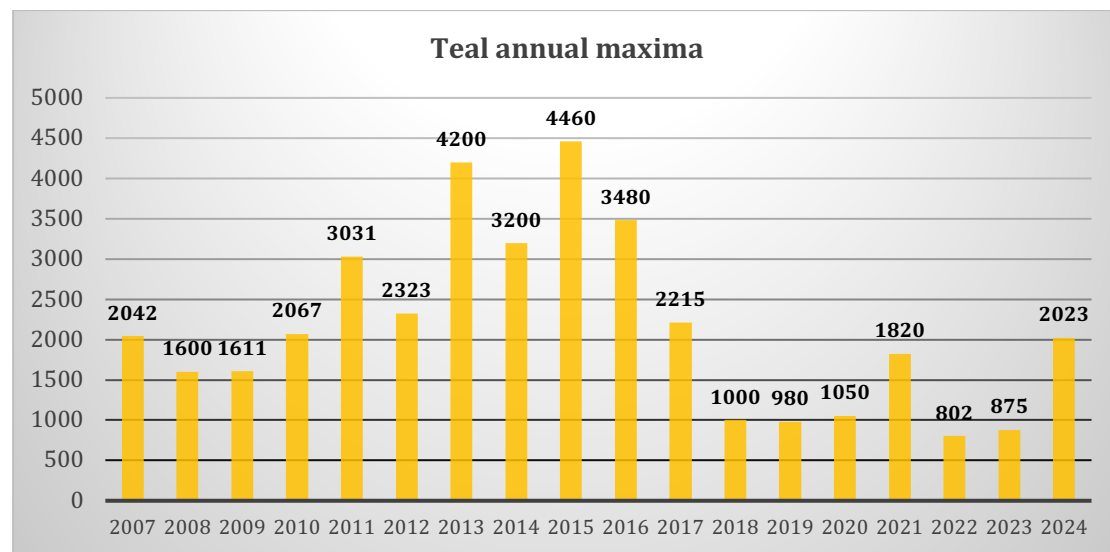


There has been an ongoing increase in the annual totals of Gadwall since 2015 but with a sudden jump in the most recent two years taking the site maximum to near 500 birds an amazing total compared to the peak of 63 recorded as recently as 2013. Up to 228 birds were noted between January and April with no more than 46 during April and early May but numbers then rose quickly to 120 by May 10th with 250 in early June when the first of at least ten broods of ducklings, another record total, was seen. As water levels dropped in August the number of feeding dabbling ducks built up to take advantage of the rich feeding and there were 350 Gadwall by August 15th with the annua peak of 490 logged on 29th. As Area 4 and most of the pools dried out in September numbers fell to 160 on 4th and there were no more than 40 in October but 320 were again feeding on the inundation pool, mainly Area 4, in November and up to 180 were in that area and the Trent Flash in December.



Gadwall Area 4 August 2024

Teal *Anas crecca*



Although the annual maximum count of Teal suggested a resurgence in the number of birds using the site after several years of lower numbers this was in fact very much a on-off event as the count recorded on January 4th was never repeated but there were up to 1084 birds in early March during the spring passage period. In fact, numbers remained quite high through March and April with between 200 and 560 birds on most dates up to April 25th after which numbers fell quickly with 50 remaining on May 2nd but only five on 13th. Eight birds in May included three females but there was no suggestion of breeding. As usual failed breeders swelled numbers in June with 70 by 26th then up to 80 to mid-August when an influx saw 140 present from 20th – 21st with 170 26th and a peak of 400 on September 9th. A one-off count of 300 on October 12th belied the fact that numbers were very low through the autumn with intermittent presence of variable sized flocks including 250 on November 5th and up to 500 in December.



Teal Area 4 September 2024



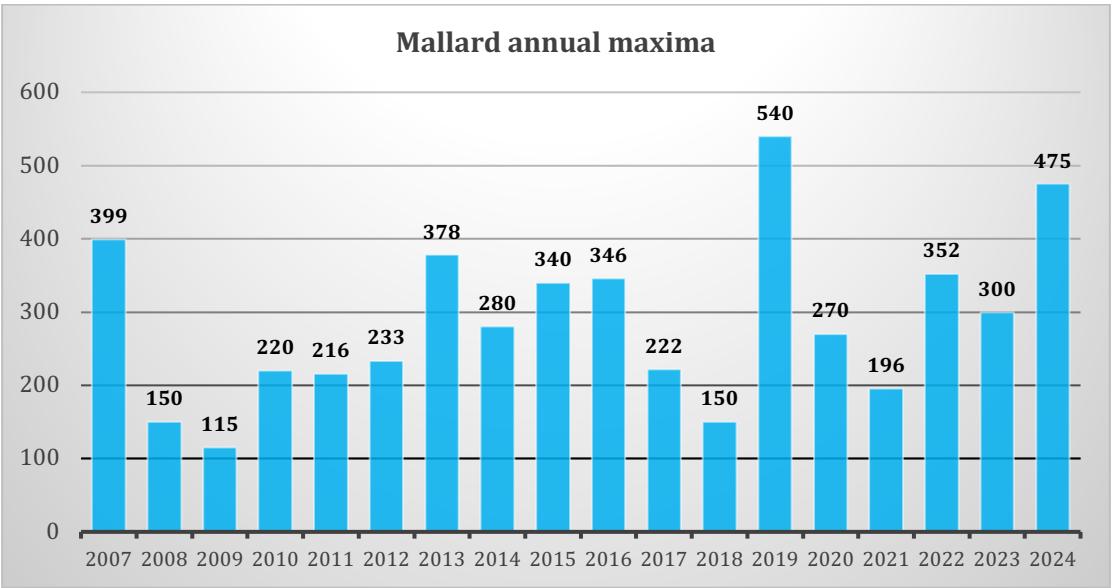
Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

A drake Green-winged Teal arrived on May 31st and remained to at least June 17th after which it may have moulted its distinctive breeding plumage or moved on – maybe the autumn will tell

as birds reassume their full plumage. A drone Green-winged Teal was present in 2023 from May 18th – 25th being the first since 2019 so this year's bird could be the same individual.



Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*



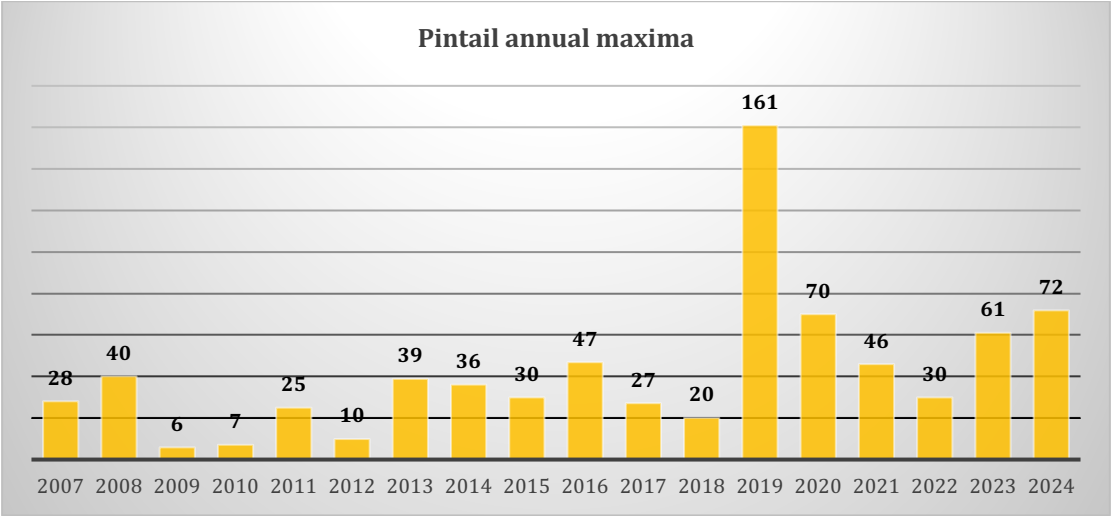
The number of Mallards in the early winter were not exceptional varying from lows of c150 to highs of 230 – 260. The first broods appeared on April 2nd and although no survey was undertaken there were at least 35 broods seen with many young fledging as they beat the desiccation in the late summer. Numbers built up in June with moulting drakes gathering in abundance and a count of 386 on June 17th was unprecedented being followed by 475 on July 6th the second highest total ever recorded on the Flats and at a very odd time of year. Although 400 were noted on August 21st numbers later in the autumn and winter were unexceptional.



Pintail *Anas acuta*

Usage of the site by Pintail continues to be a sign that the habitat on the Trent grass fields in particular is favourable for this species with birds being present through both winter periods but there was no obvious spring passage this year. The peak count of the year occurred on February 11th when 72 birds were present a sudden increase on the 41 counted in the previous week but this level of abundance was not maintained and numbers were back down to 34 by February 23rd with c 28 through to March 21st when most birds departed leaving 7 - 8 through

April with the last three of the spring during May 1st – 7th. An early bird appeared on August 4th but there were no more than three until September 17th when 23 were recorded and the autumn peak of 50 occurred on October 7th with 20 – 23 birds being regular in Area 4 in November until it froze on 20th after which up to ten in December.



Pintail Area 4 November 2024



Pintail December 6th 2024

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

A female on March 17th was unusually early as drakes or pairs are typically the earliest migrants. It was not seen again with the first drake appearing on March 30th and staying to April 2nd. A run of records from then onwards saw up to two drakes and at least one duck on most dates to May 18th when four birds were present. There was then a gap in sightings until June 14th with an eclipse drake and a duck from July 27th to August 1st but there was again no proof of successful breeding. Four on August 4th with five fledged juveniles 6th and a peak of seven birds on 10th were followed by four from 15th – 17th and the last bird of the year on the surprisingly early date of August 19th.

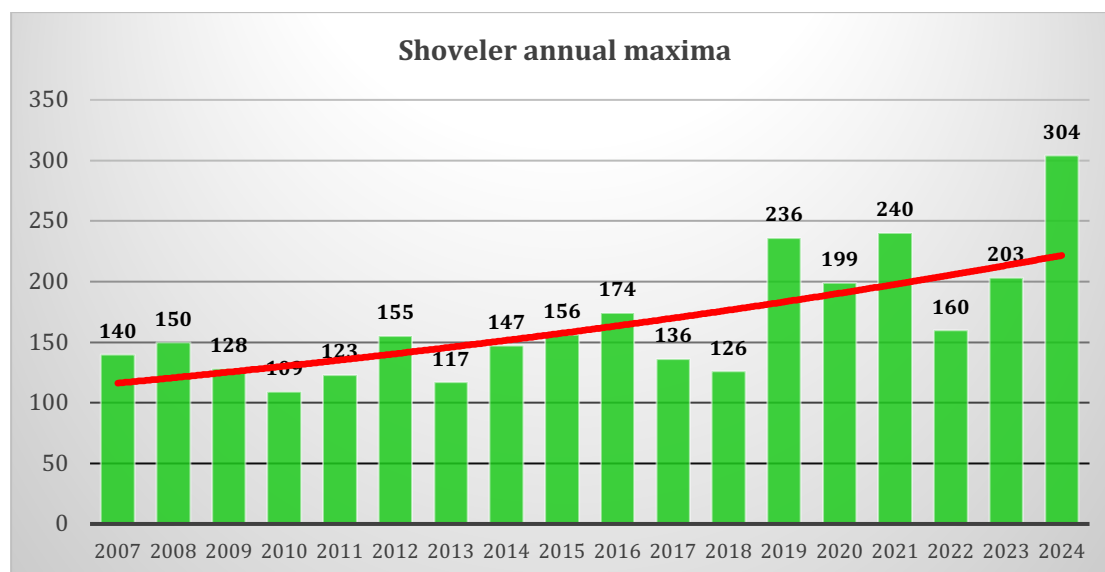


Drake Garganey April 2024



Garganey August 2024

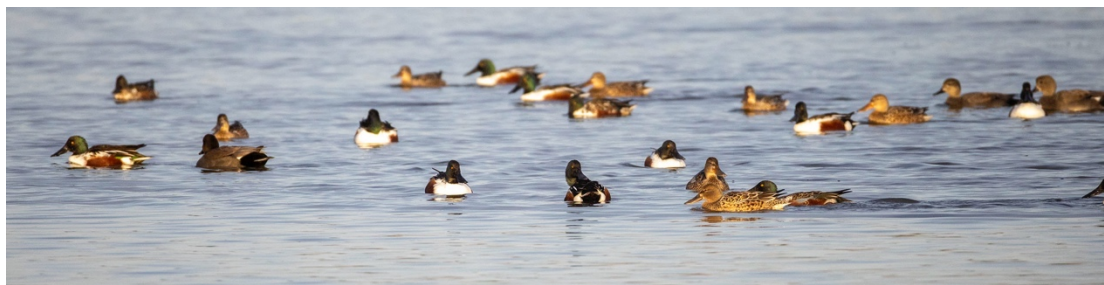
Shoveler *Anas clypeata*



The general increase in Shoveler abundance not only on the Flats but around the Humber continues and as the trend line shows this has been ongoing since at least 2010 with a substantial jump to a new all-time record count of 304 on the Flats on November 17th the vast majority of which were in Area 4. In the first winter period numbers varied from c40 to 165 rising to 220 in early March as spring passage birds moved through the site before falling to 50 on April 10th and 20 by the 26th. Ten drakes and four ducks through May suggested four breeding attempts and four broods were seen between June 8th and 29th with most of the young fledging. Up to 60 gathered in August with 92 by September 10th but no more than 80 in October before the rapid increase to 304 on November 17th with a peak of 160 in December.



Shoveler Area 4 November 2024



Shoveler Area 4 November 2024



Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Recorded in spring from February 10th with a peak of 12 on April 1st but only one record of two on May 5th with no proof of attempted breeding. Later in the year singles on August 26th and October 20th.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

It was an exceptional early winter and spring for this species with birds mainly exploiting the deep flooded Trent Flash but also the pool in field 6D. Up to 17 in January were followed by a jump to 109 on February 23rd with the year's record-breaking peak of 112 on March 2nd and up to 109 remaining to 23rd with 68 on April 2nd after which virtually all the birds left the site. A female on July 12th was encouraging and she subsequently appeared with a brood of ten ducklings on 18th but there were no further sightings of the brood and they may well have succumbed to predation. This was the first proven breeding since 2015. Three on September 28th with one or two on a few dates from then to the year-end were typical of recent years.



Tufted Ducks February 2024

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Westward bound flocks passed over the Flats late in the evenings on July 13th, 230 birds with an exceptional 2000 on 31st and 150 August 11th.



Common Scoters July 2024

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Up to eight fed on the deeper ponds mainly by the Prospect hide from January to April 2nd with the first of the late winter on October 5th after which there were up to three in the same area to the year end.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

An adult pair, a rare occurrence in itself as most inner Humber records concern birds of the year, arrived on the Trent Flash on December 5th and were feeding there on the morning of 6th before moving to the pools in the inundation area where they were strangely mobbed by two Marsh Harriers. This was only the eighth record on the Flats since 2006 with the most recent being a first-winter on October 12th 2020 and the most unusual being a drake from May 6th – 10th 2007.



Red-breasted Mergansers December 6th 2024



Red-breasted Mergansers December 6th 2024



Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Two females on January 7th, a drake April 1st and three flying west on October 28th.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

The usual gathering of up to 40 birds roosting in the reedbeds at the Whitton end in winter and up to ten around the site in other months.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

One had returned by January 24th with two on 30th and the first back on the new reedbed breeding site on February 13th. Breeding birds were again quite widespread but some suffered as pools dried out through the late spring though at least 15 broods were present on July 28th and 30+ birds on August 8th. As the pools dried out in August most birds left the site but the flooding in late September saw a return of a few birds during October with ten counted from the main hide on October 4th. All left in the November freeze but up to three returned in December.



Juvenile Little Grebe Area 4 August 2024

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Up to nine in spring from March 5th to June 8th but although birds displayed there was no proof of successful breeding. One on August 6th and two September 29th completed a record-breaking year.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

The deep flooding of the Trent Flash and the other semi-permanent waters on the site produced an exception and record-breaking number of Cormorant records in early 2024. Birds loafed mainly in field 7L where a peak of 40 was counted on May 24th typically no more than five birds are recorded on the pools in a normal year.



Cormorants May 24th 2024

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Recorded from January with the first boomer on February 10th a new record early date. Subsequently at least seven booming males established territories another record total and it was estimated that at least seven females bred but the number of fledged young was not ascertained. After the late summer drought only odd birds were seen in the late autumn – winter.



Male Bittern New reedbed May 2024

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

What was assumed to be the same bird was seen on January 1st when it roosted with Little Egrets and 13th. One was seen again on February 12th being regular from 18th to March 25th. There was then a gap in sightings until one on June 23rd when one arrived for a short stay. A juvenile on July 15th was followed by a probable Cattle Egret x Little Egret hybrid juvenile on

August 14th – 15th with a pure Cattle Egret juvenile from 18th – 19th and another bird 22nd – 25th. Yet another record-breaking year but one that is expected to be exceeded in coming years as this species spreads northwards in Britain.



Cattle Egret June 2024



Juvenile Cattle Egret August 2024

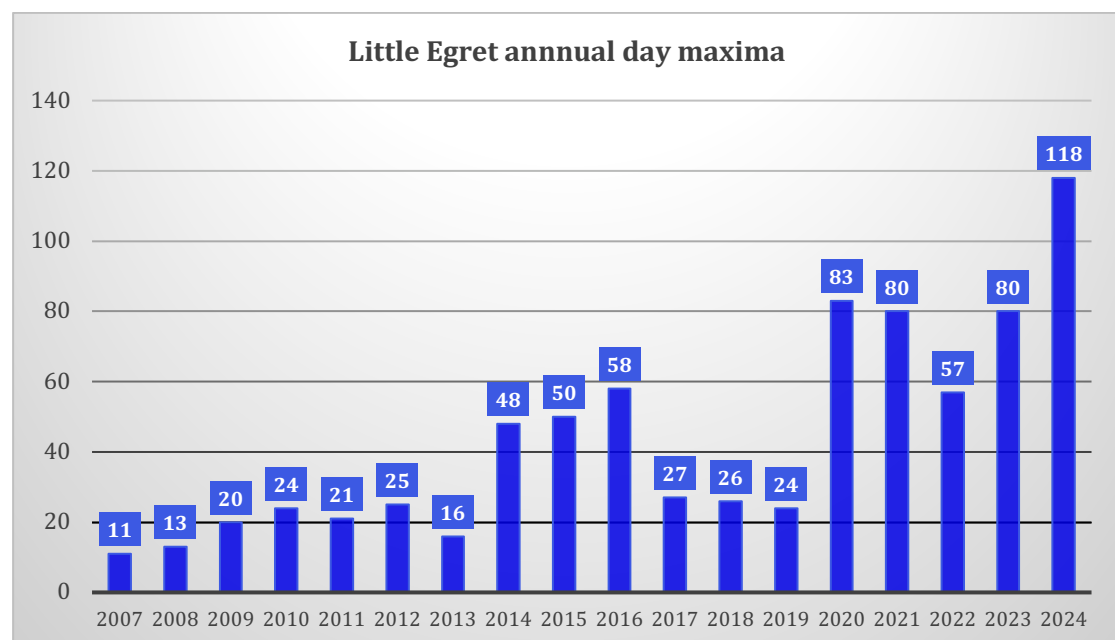




Juvenile Cattle Egret August 2024

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

No more than eight were recorded in January – February but numbers rose in March with a peak of 25 from 23rd into April when 45 roosted on the 26th. As breeding birds started to use the site again from late May numbers rose progressively from 34 on 21st to 58 by June 8th then 85 on June 30th and for the first time 100 were counted on July 20th with the year's new peak of 118 on August 10th. There were still 80 on August 25th but as the pools started to dry out rapidly numbers fell and only eight were noted on September 15th with even lower numbers after that and no more than two in October – December.





Little Egrets Area 4 August 2024



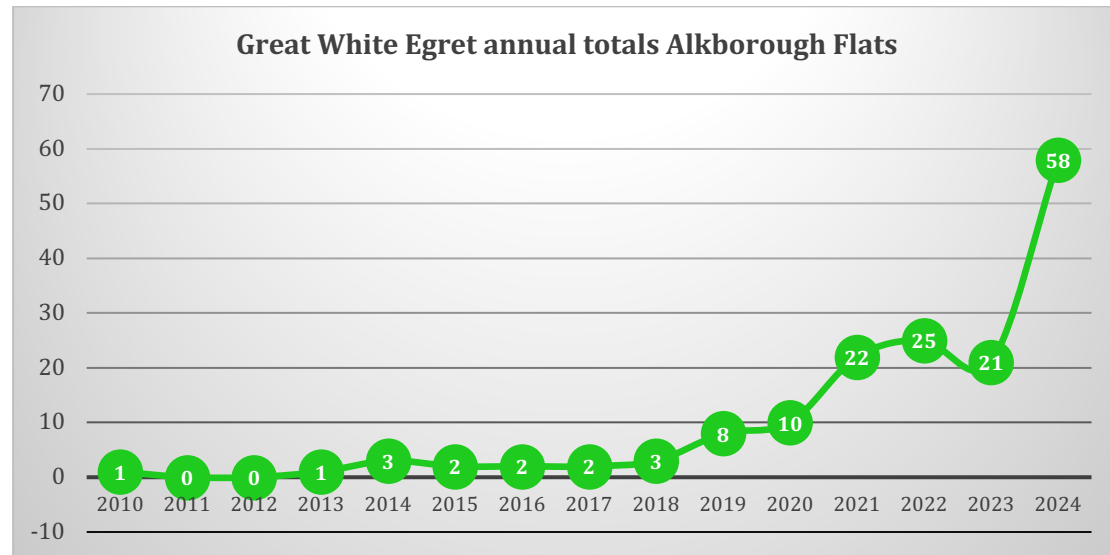
Little Egrets Area 7 June 2024



Little Egrets August 2024

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

As predicted Great White Egrets continue to smash all records year on year as their British breeding population increases and spreads. This year a very rough estimate put the number of birds occurring at 58 although there could of course have been some duplication with individuals occurring in more than one period of the year but even so the increase in abundance is more than apparent. Peak dates were May 27th with nine a new record total and June 30th and August 9th with eight.



Great White and Little Egrets August 2024

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Numbers peaked in August as the flashes dried out with a minimum of ten birds present on some days.



Grey Herons August 2024

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

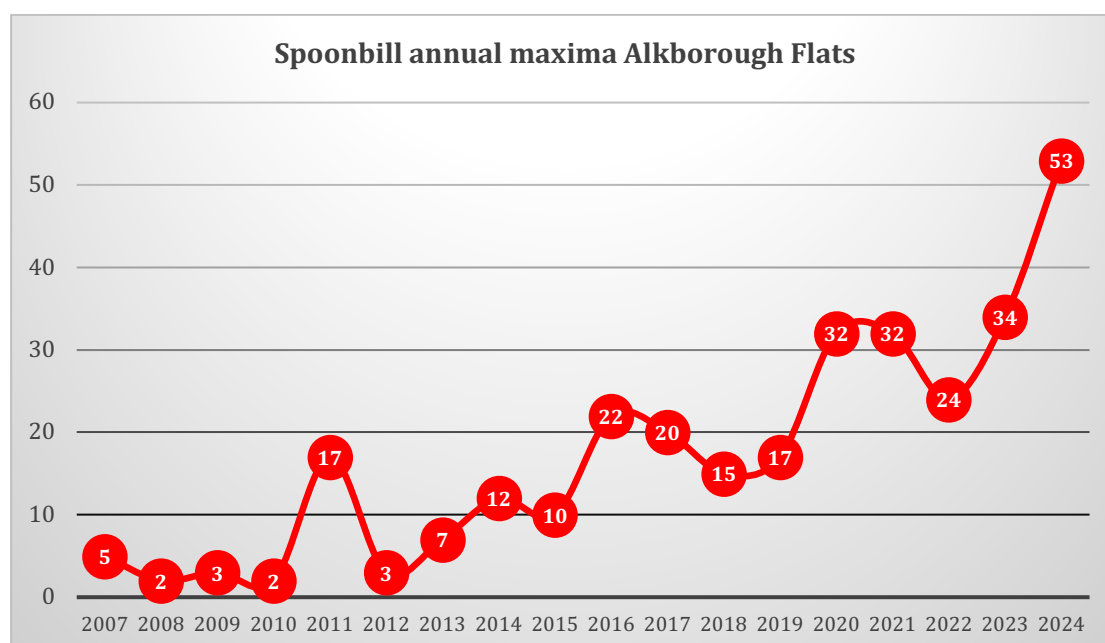
After the influx of 2023 it was a much quieter year with one passing south at dusk on January 18th then an adult May 30th to June 1st and probably the same bird again June 9th – 10th.



Glossy Ibis June 2024

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

The trend for earlier arrivals and later departures continued through the year with the first four birds appearing on March 3rd. There were up to four birds with a variety of individuals being noted between March 5th and April 21st with a rise to seven on April 23rd then 15 on 29th but after that date numbers fell with no more than five to May 10th when numbers rose again to seven with the month's peak of 22 on 23rd. The first fledged juvenile arrived with adults on May 25th an exceptionally early date and there were two juveniles the following day. During late June peak counts of 32 birds were noted rising again in July to 41 by the 28th but the year's highest total and an all-time new record count of 53 was recorded on August 18th. There were still 30 on August 26th but departures then reduced numbers to 17 from 30th to September 7th with a brief influx seeing 18 again on September 17th after which most birds left with six on 18th and subsequently one October 3rd and three passing through on 10th.





Spoonbills July 2024



Spoonbills August 2024



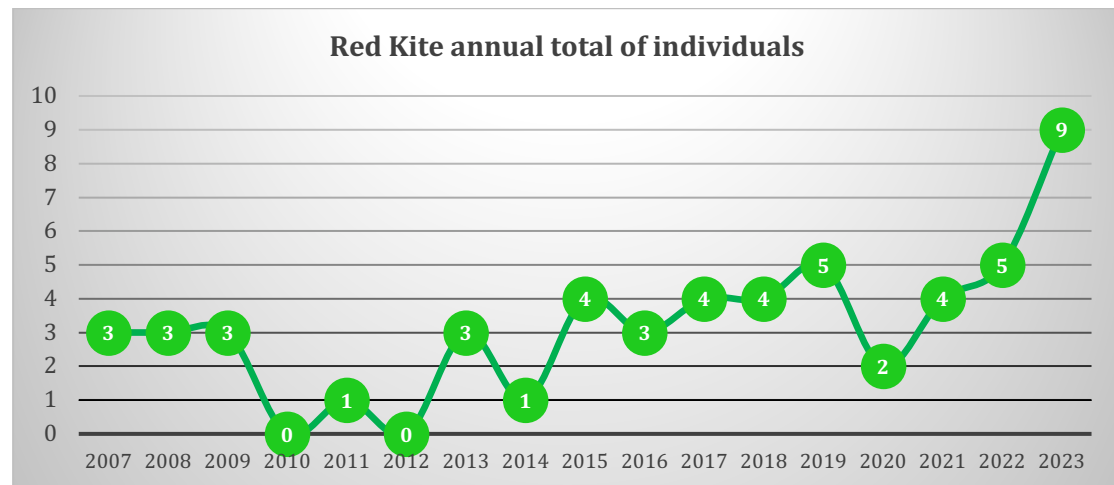
Adult and food begging juvenile Spoonbill June 1st 2024



Spoonbills September 18th 2024

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

With nine individuals noted in 2024 it was the best year yet and it seems that this species is finally showing signs of a sustained increase. Two flew north on March 16th but all the other records concerned single birds.



Juvenile Red Kite August 27th 2024



Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Breeding Marsh Harriers Alkborough Flats

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Males	1	0	2	2	1	2	2	4	3	6	5	5
Females	1	0	2	2	1	2	2	5	4	7	6	7
Nests	1	0	2	2	1	2	2	4	4	7	6	7
successful	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	4	2	2
Fledged	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	2	7	11	3	5

Roost counts in January peaked with 36 birds from 4th – 10th and there were still 18 in mid-February. Five males and seven females bred but it was a disastrous season with just two nests fledging two and three juveniles the second poor season in succession and it seems that food shortages may well be responsible. Post fledging the birds left the site quickly and there was a real dearth of records in September and October before winter numbers built up again with ten roosting on October 19th, 18 on November 17th and 20+ December 6th.

A wing tagged bird Orange KH seen on March 19th had been ringed as a female nestling on June 1st 2023 at Thorpe Marshes, Norfolk, UK. She was then seen at RSPB Blacktoft Sands on October 22nd and near Barton-upon-Humber on November 1st before being seen at Alkborough Flats March 19th 2024. A real wanderer she has since been seen at Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, on April 8th 2024 and surprisingly near Brigsteer, Cumbria, on April 28th 2024. A striking leucistic bird that flew east on March 26th was subsequently seen flying south down the Lincolnshire coast the following day. Six birds were mobbing two Otters over Area 4 on the morning of December 6th.



Male Marsh Harrier March 2024



Marsh Harrier fledged juvenile from one of the two successful nests July 2024



Wing tagged Marsh Harrier KH Alkborough Flats March 2024

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

The only records in the early part of the year were a second winter male seen on January 1st and a ringtail on the 22nd. A juvenile flew through on September 10th and there were further ringtails seen on October 13th and November 2nd.



Juvenile Hen Harrier September 10th 2024

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

An adult male seen on May 11th and 12th was the first since 2019 when the old female and the wing-tagged male disappeared.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

The usual sporadic sightings of birds hunting the outer Flats with a pair as typically breeding in the tree strip by the lower car park where juveniles were calling on July 22nd.



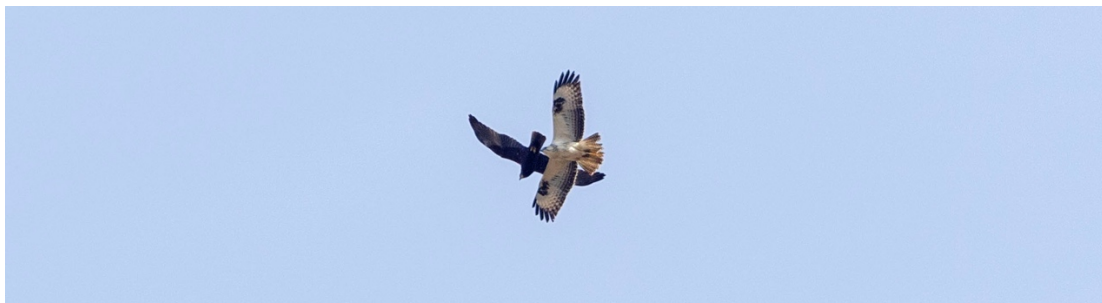
Sparrowhawk with Starling prey January 2024 new reedbed



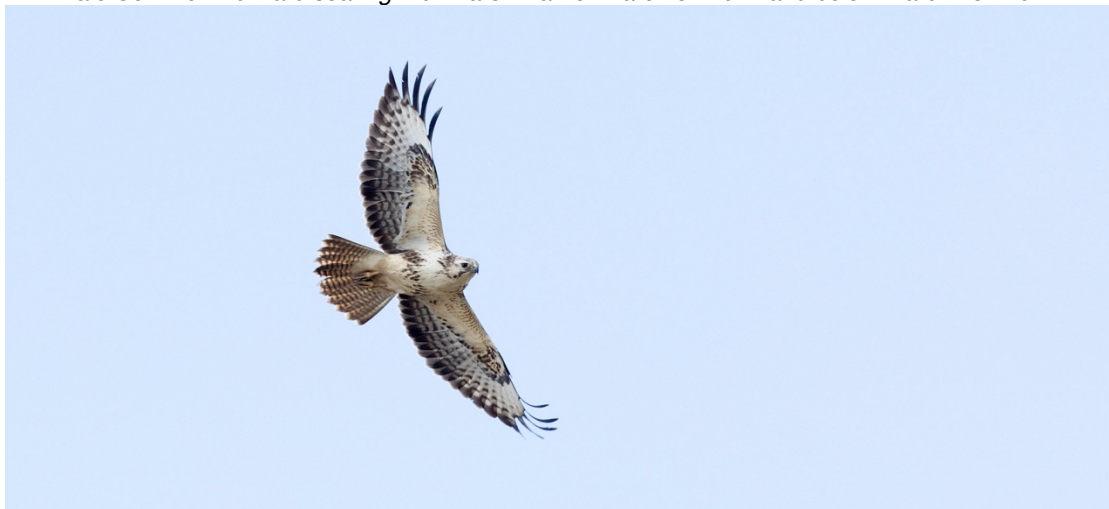
Male Sparrowhawk with Starling prey item new reedbed January 2024

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

A pale morph bird was seen on March 8th and probably the same bird on the 26th. The regular four pairs bred on the adjacent escarpment and woodlands with the pair in the oak strip fledging three young a high total. At least seven birds were in the air together on September 13th and may have involved some passage birds.



Pale Common Buzzard soaring with Marsh Harrier March 8th 2024 and below March 28th 2024



Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Three records in the year was above average but the species is still surprisingly scarce given the location of the site. Single birds were seen on April 10th, June 2nd and September 10th.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Up to four birds hunting the site through the year but no breeding on the Flats again in 2024 and still no nest boxes erected.



Kestrel by Tower hide August 2024



Merlin *Falco columbarius*

At least one bird was seen regularly from January to early March with one on April 20th. An early returnee on August 18th was followed by fairly regular sightings from mid-September onwards.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

It was a very good year for Hobbies on the Flats with the first record concerning four birds that had gathered to feed on emergent insects over the New Reedbed on May 2nd. Up to five birds at one time fed in the same area through to late May but of course more than five individuals could have been involved. One or two 2cy birds were then present regularly through the summer and early autumn often perching on the dead trees in the reedbeds. September saw more birds present with six feeding on dragonflies at dusk over the new reedbed on the 11th and at least two birds were seen most days to the month end with a juvenile last being seen on October 5th.



Hobby taking Hairy Hawker dragonfly over new reedbed May 2024



Male Hobby hunting over the pools in the inundation June 2024 and below May 2024





2cy Hobby May 25th 2024 – these dead trees in the reedbed were regularly used as look out perches

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

One or two birds were recorded intermittently throughout the year with the usual reduction of sightings during the breeding period.



Adult Peregrine April 2024

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

With no breeding bird survey carried out it was impossible to ascertain whether there was a change in status of this species but good numbers were calling in the expanding Trent Flash

reedbed with less in the New Reedbed but it seems that numbers were probably on a par with the previous year.



Differing aged juvenile Water Rails all by the main hide August 2024



Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

There appeared to be an increase in the number of birds present with pairs breeding in new locations including Area 4 where a number of broods were seen and in contrast to most years at least 20 birds were visible between August 8th and September 14th.

Coot *Fulica atra*

One on January 2nd was an unusual mid-winter occurrence with the next arriving on February 10th and a marked influx seeing 30 present on the 16th. Numbers rose quickly in early March to 75 by the 5th with a peak of 115 on the 9th. No breeding bird survey was undertaken but at least

30 pairs bred and there were three broods on May 21st. Several more broods hatched and some fledged before the pools started to dry out but oddly birds left early with numbers down to 25 by June 14th of which six were fledged young and there were only five birds left on August 8th with the last seen soon after.



Coots in Area 4 March 10th 2024 – at least five pairs bred around that lagoon

Common Crane *Grus grus*

A pair displayed on the Trent bank from April 17th – 26th commuting across the Trent to Blacktoft Sands but then appeared to depart. Four flew north on May 5th with two seen again 7th and four 18th but there was then a gap until two on June 12th and a party of eight flew through on August 17th. Later in the year two were on the Flats early on October 12th before departing westwards.



Pair of Common Cranes on the Trent bank April 18th 2024



Bugling Common Crane flying over the Flats April 26th 2024

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

One arrived early on February 3rd but it was March 5th before it was joined by two more birds and there were then up to five to May with a flock of ten flying north on May 16th. A pair appeared to attempt to nest but as usual there was no positive outcome and all the birds departed the site by June.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

One on March 16th was the first of a weak spring passage that peaked with 20 on May 27th when birds were reattempting to nest on Area 8 and in fields 7L and 7M but none of the attempts even survived to hatching. With the water levels in the inundation pools falling to optimum levels in August and September there were the highest counts for many years with successive peaks of 205 August 19th then 332 25th and later 230 September 14th with 180 21st after which there was just one record of one on the 28th. A few colour ringed birds were seen again mainly originating from North Yorkshire.



Colour ringed and flagged juvenile Avocet from Nosterfield, North Yorkshire, August 2024



Avocets Area 4 September 2024

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

March 13th – October 25th

The only early spring record was of a female April 13th – 14th with the next on June 1st. Autumn passage kicked off in late July with a peak of seven birds on August 25th but four remained from September 7th – 9th and one juvenile lingered to October 7th.

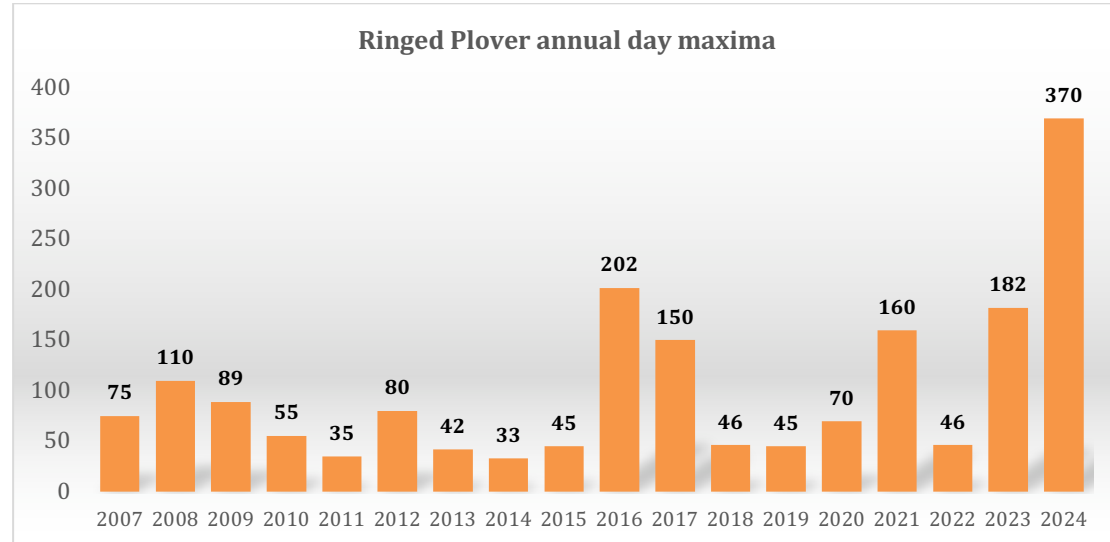


Juvenile Little Ringed Plovers Trent Flash August 2024 above and below Area 4 September 2024



Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

A bird flew over on March 30th but there were no more than six until May 21st when a short-lived but notable spring passage of northern birds saw a peak of **370** birds recorded on May 26th the highest total ever. Autumn saw some good counts on the drying Trent Flash with 120 August 20th then 150 26th after which most counts occurred on high spring tides with 50 September 8th, 35 October 3rd and the last 14 on October 22nd by which time all of the roosting mud had been flooded.

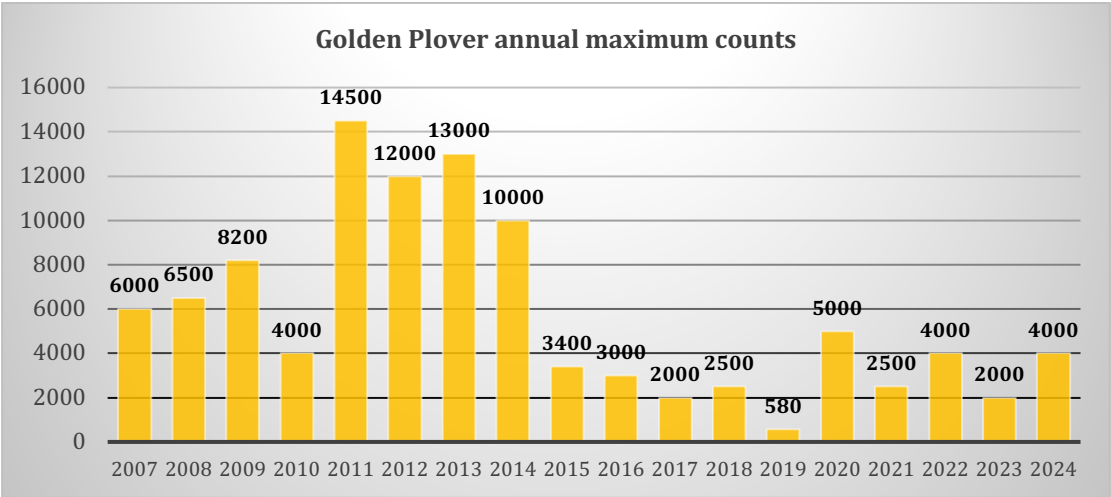


Ringed Plovers, Dunlin and Sanderling May 2024



Juvenile Ringed Plover September 2024

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*



The number of Golden Plovers using the site remained very low in the early year in comparison to the bumper years prior to the colonisation by common reed. In fact, the highest counts of the occurred in January when the 1550 was recorded on the fields by the Trent Flash and there were hardly any records after 630 were counted on February 9th until a flock began to use the remaining area at the north end of the Trent Flash for loafing and bathing in late October after which it flooded and only varying numbers of birds occasionally joined the Lapwings on the wet grass fields with peaks of 1500 December 6th and 2700 13th rising to 4000 in mid-December the highest count since 2002.



Golden Plovers and Lapwing Trent Flash fields 7L and 7M January 2024

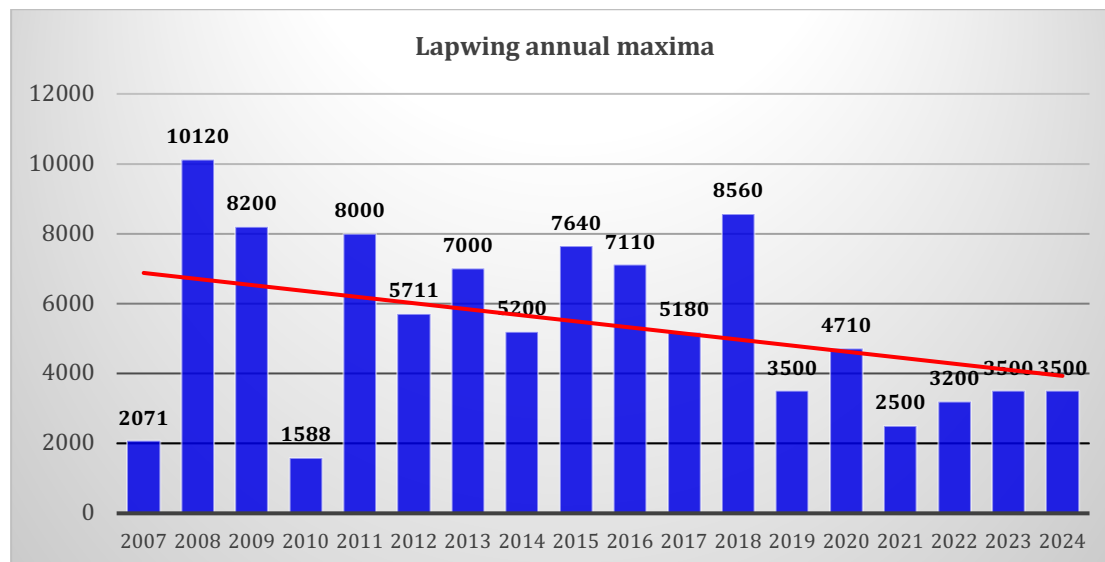


Golden Plovers over Trent Flash October 2024

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Early year singles were noted on January 11th, March 3rd – 8th and 28th with spring peaks of four on May 12th and seven 25th. Odd singles in October and November.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*



Lapwing were slower to decline on the Flats than Golden Plover but there is now a clear sign that numbers are nowhere near what they were up to 2018 and the site is proving less attractive to wintering flocks. The annual peak occurred early in January with 3500 on 6th but a short freeze around 19th saw all but 35 birds leave the area. As the freeze gave way 2435 returned by February 9th but this was the last big count of the winter and an early departure saw only 102 present on February 23rd and no more than 56 in March. A few pairs attempted to breed but once again very few young hatched and those that did only survived for short periods until a late brood fledged by the Trent hide in July. No more than 34 were seen in August and September was just as poor with a peak of 300 birds but numbers built up to 800 by late October and 2200 mid-December though they were sporadic in occurrence often leaving the site to feed across the Trent or loaf on the Trent Sand bar.



Fledged juvenile Lapwing Trent Flash fields June 2024 – this bird fledged at Island Farm across the Trent and moved to the Flats post fledging



Lapwings January 2024

Knot *Calidris canutus*

One on April 17th was followed by a flock of 55 on May 25th, an exceptional occurrence. Autumn saw singles on a few dates with two September 10th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

One on May 12th with a compact spring passage during May 24th – 26th peaking with four birds then in the autumn singles occurred on August 19th and 23rd – 26th with two on 22nd.



Moulting adult Sanderling August 2024

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

A dismal year for this declining species with one in spring May 25th – 26th and singles in autumn on September 7th and 12th.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Up to four in spring from May 24th – 26th with a light autumn passage between July 31st and September 16th peaking with seven juveniles on August 29th.



Adult Curlew Sandpiper May 25th 2024



Juvenile Curlew Sandpiper September 2024

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Two birds in the year was above the norm with an adult on the Trent Flash from August 3rd – 9th and a fine juvenile in Area 4 from September 13th – 22nd with occasional absences when it moved to Blacktoft Sands.



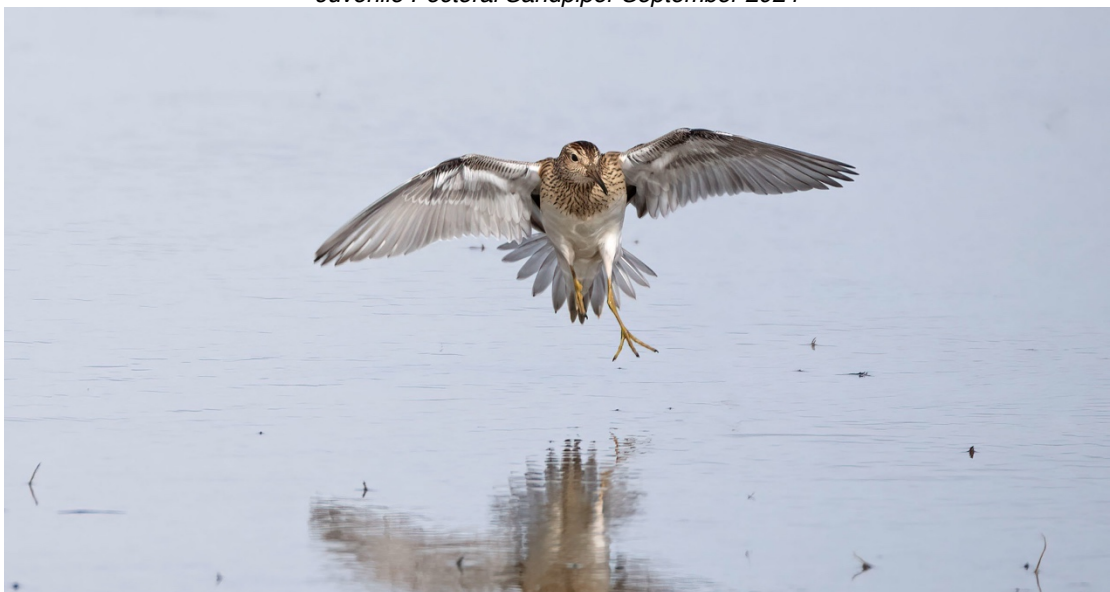
Adult Pectoral Sandpiper Trent Flash August 2024



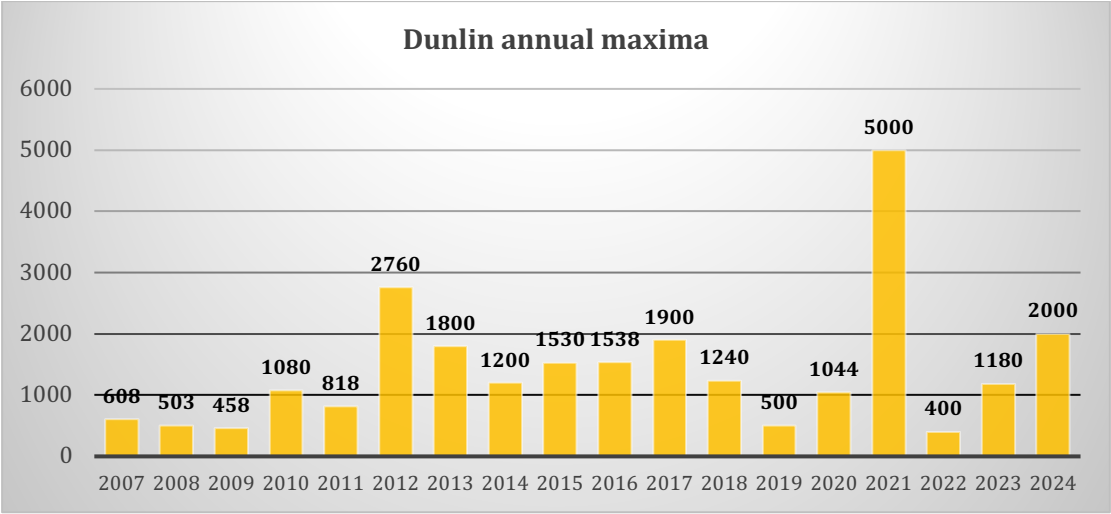
Adult Pectoral Sandpiper Trent Flash August 2024



Juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper September 2024



Dunlin *Calidris alpina*



There was a fairly consistent presence of Dunlin feeding on the wet grass fields in Area 7 during the first three months of the year with a range of 120 – 480 birds falling to 60 by March 26th as birds departed after over-wintering. Spring passage was rather sporadic with a peak of 112 in April on 19th then up to 72 to late May when another surge of migrants saw 104 amongst the Ringed Plovers on May 26th. Autumn passage was very weak with a peak of only 80 on August 20th and no more than 154 in September but as has become regular in recent years the high spring tides in October brought in a large roosting flock of up to 2000 birds forming the highest total of the year. With a lack of mud in November and December spring tide roosts were much lower.

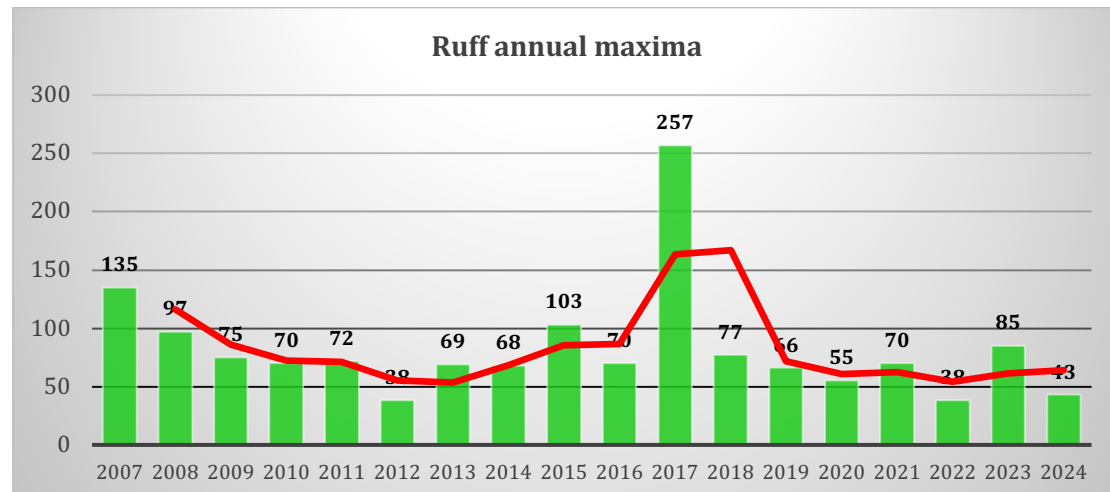


High tide roost of Dunlin on Trent Flash field 7N prior to total flooding October 2024



Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

None were seen in January with three on February 18th then a spring peak of 15 between March 18th and 20th, nine April 13th – 14th and a single female from 20th – 26th then three or four between May 5th and 12th. No June records this year with the first two of the autumn on July 12th. It was late July before numbers increased to nine on 28th then in August 16 on 4th included the first juvenile with a peak of 30 on 25th rising to **43** on September 10th with 32 on 18th but numbers then fell to 14 in October and no more than five in November. Declines in breeding numbers in Scandinavia and the Baltic states could well now be impacting the number of birds occurring in Britain each autumn.



Adult Ruff August 2024

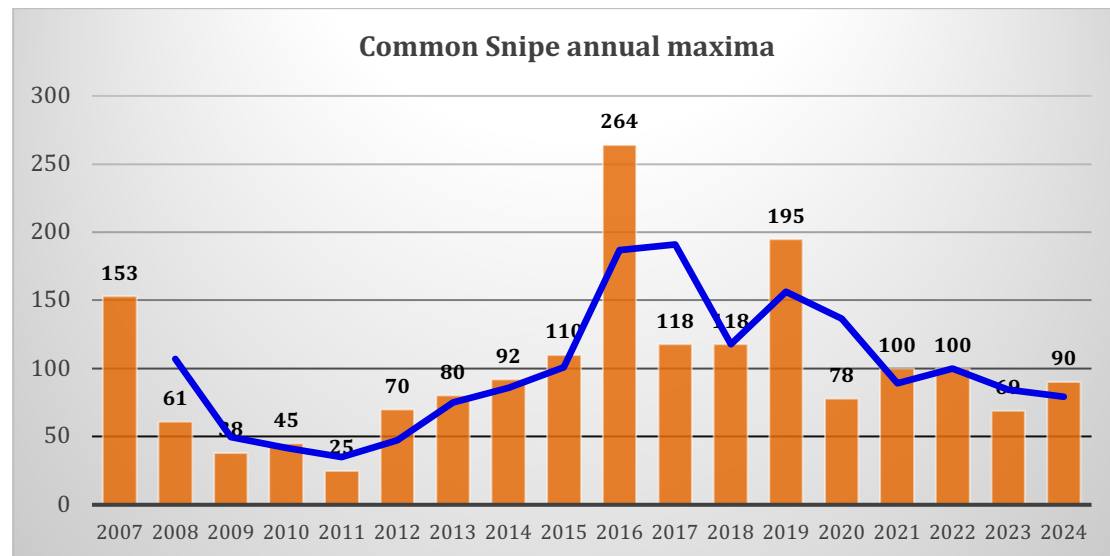
Jack Snipe *Limnocryptes minimus*

One on January 17th was the only record.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Up to 30 were noted in January but there then appeared to be an exodus and it was April before 12 were seen on 20th with six 24th. One on May 11th but no suggestion of breeding though eight were on site by June 29th possibly hinting at a failed breeding season. In autumn numbers

peaked at 90 on September 17th but with a minimum of 60 in October – November when birds were widespread across the site and higher numbers could well have been present.



Common Snipe September 2024

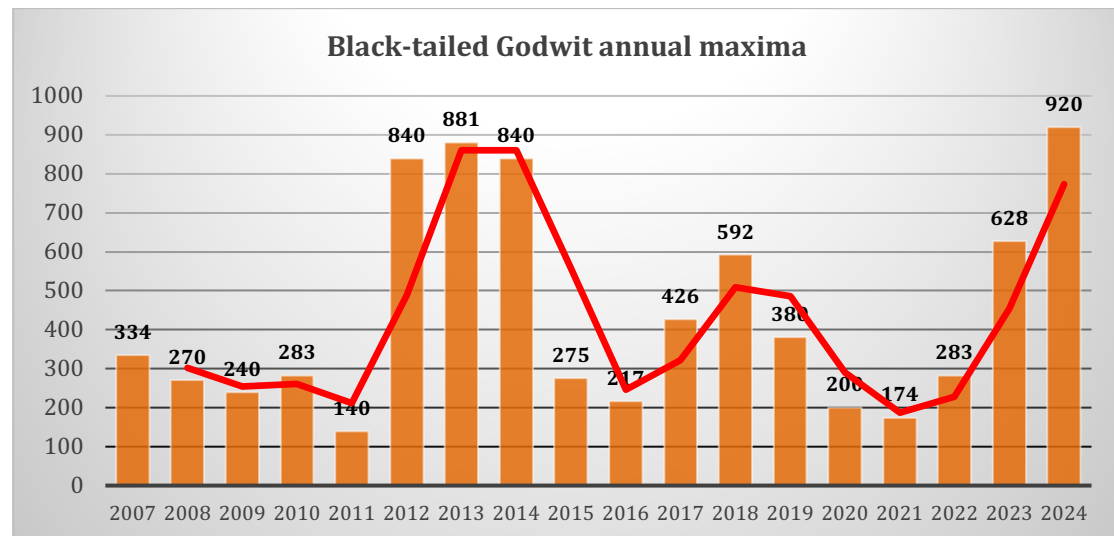
Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*

One by the sewage works on January 11th.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

A wintering flock held up to 90 birds through to February 10th when numbers on the wet grass fields started to increase with 420 on 13th then **850** on 15th. Numbers then fell but remained around the 650 mark to early March when there were again 830 birds with a new spring and all-time peak of **920** counted on March 19th. There was clearly a turnover of birds through the later spring with numbers down to 80 in early April but 720 again on 19th. The last of the actual spring passage was one on May 13th but 2cy birds returned in June with 130 on 30th and 145 July 2nd. Up to 190 were noted in August with 210 September 9th – 18th but as the spring tides

flooded the inundation pools almost all of the birds left with three on October 9th the only record in that month then up to 22 sporadically in November – December.



Black-tailed Godwits over field 7G where they had been feeding February 2024



Black-tailed Godwits and Ruff Area 4 August 2024

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

A flock of 12 on April 13th was the only record of the year.

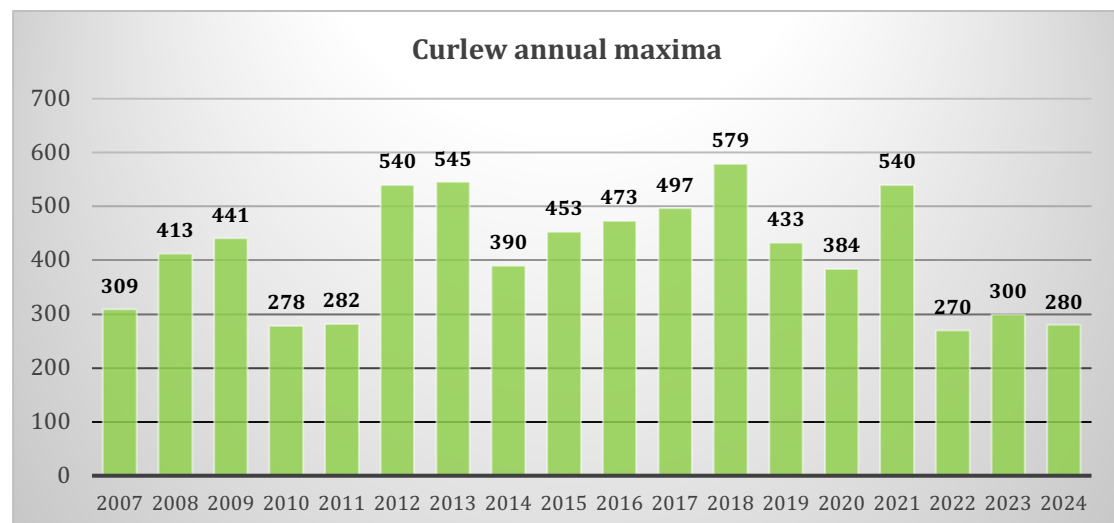
Whimbrel *Numenius phaepus*

The first of the spring arrived on April 12th staying to 20th with one or two on several dates to May 16th when two birds were present and a male in was frequently singing and displaying for over a week a most unusual event. The male stayed to May 26th but then departed. There was only one autumn record of a single bird on July 12th.



Whimbrel Area 6 May 2024 – this bird sang and displayed for a week

Curlew *Numenius arquata*



Although peak numbers of Curlew on the site seem to have stabilised at a new lower level c270 – 300 this is a considerable downturn from the peaks of 450 – 579 recorded during 2012 to 2021 and appears to be in line with National and International declines. Birds are still using the site for feeding, mainly on the wet grasslands and for roosting both at high tide and overnight but most of the larger counts this year occurred in the first three month of the year with 180 in January, 280 in February and 230 in March and there were no more than 60 in April and in the late summer – autumn no more than 32 until 90 were present on August 24th with this being the highest count through to December.

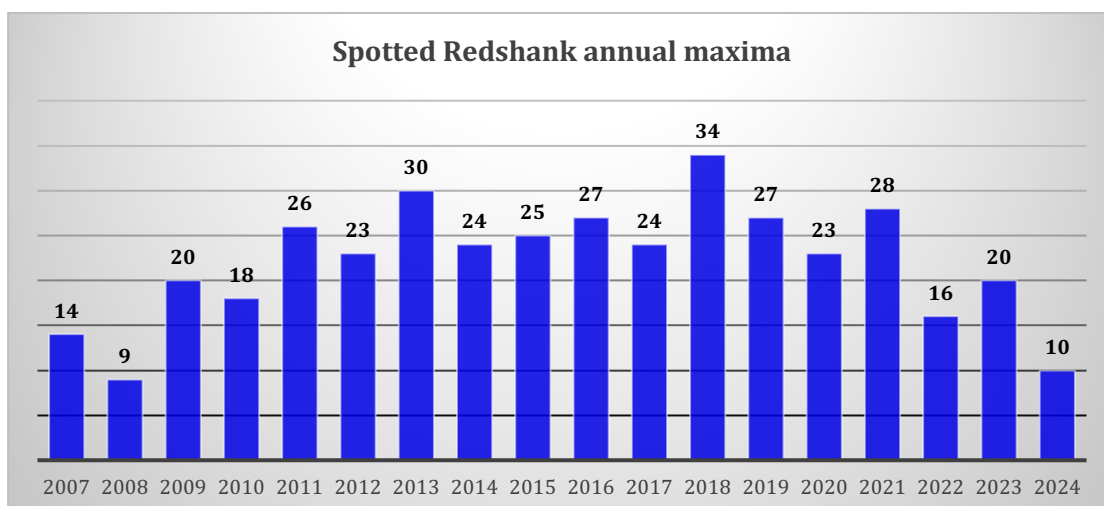


Curlew March 20th 2024



Moulting Curlew July 2024 the number of adults far outweighs the number of juveniles a bad sign

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*

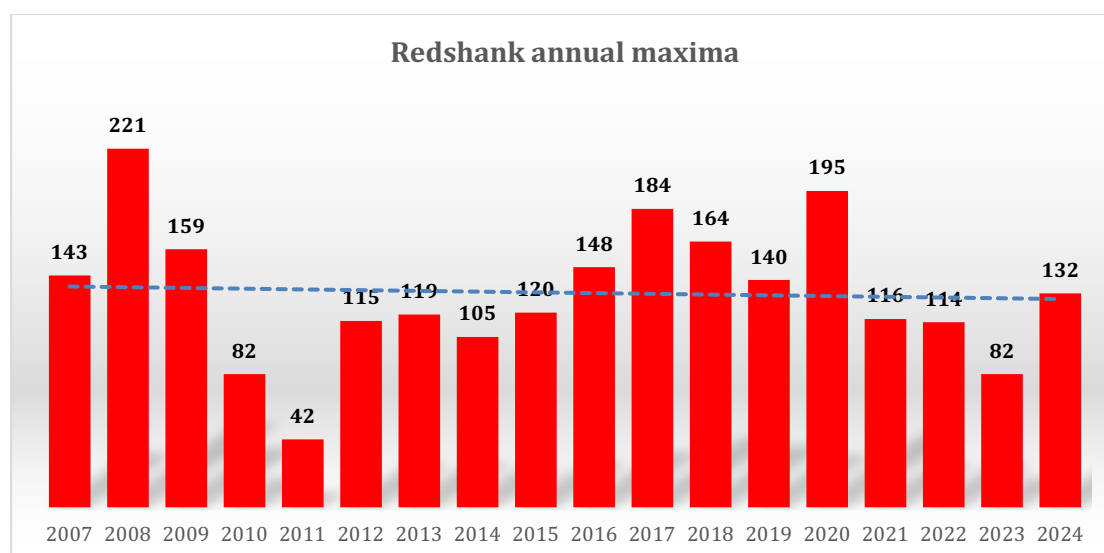


Following five years of decline 2024 saw the lowest annual total for Spotted Redshank since 2008 and as with Curlew this is in line with National declines throughout the UK and particularly around the Humber estuary. The peak during January – April was only four birds and there were long spells with no birds present. This is though, not just a function of the ongoing decline in winter presence in the UK but also of the loss of favoured feeding areas on the Flats in particular in Area 4 which is now too deep throughout the winter for birds to utilise it. Two to three birds occurred to May 8th with the first female returning on June 16th but the autumn was poor with a peak of just eight in July – August and the first juvenile not being seen until September 8th when nine birds were present in total with the annual peak occurring on 18th when 10 were counted. Six on October 3rd and four on 20th were then the only counts of more than two in October and November and again most days saw a total absence of birds.



Two Spotted Redshanks and three Greenshanks Area 4 August 2024

Redshank *Tringa totanus*



The highest annual Redshank count was 132 on January 4th when they roosted at the very south end of the site in Area 7R. Numbers then varied from 13 to 115 in February mainly as a result of birds gathering to roost on high spring tides in higher numbers and there were up to 89 in March but numbers fell rapidly from late March with no more than 26 in April and only one pair showed any signs of breeding behaviour with no positive outcome. Returning birds were late and in low numbers with six the July peak and only 30 in August and no more than 41 in September. Up to 80 occurred on odd days in October but most days saw very few birds present with no more than 36 in November and fewer in December.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Spring passage involved one or two birds on several dates between April 17th and May 24th with the first of the autumn on June 6th. Up to four were noted in July and a peak of nine on August 28th with six still on site on September 14th but there were no more records thereafter a very poor year.



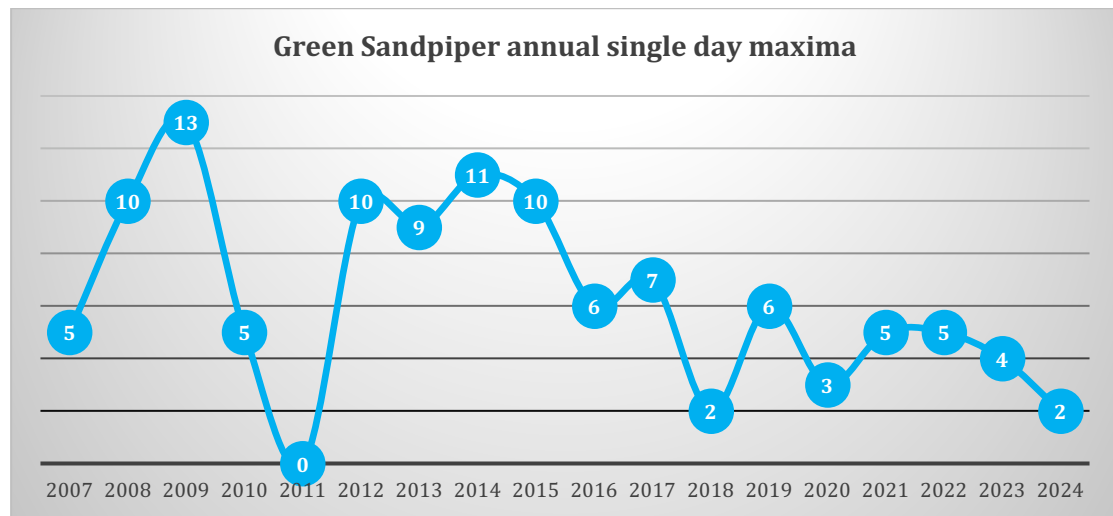
Juvenile Greenshank August 2024



Juvenile Greenshank with small fish a regular autumn prey item August 2024

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

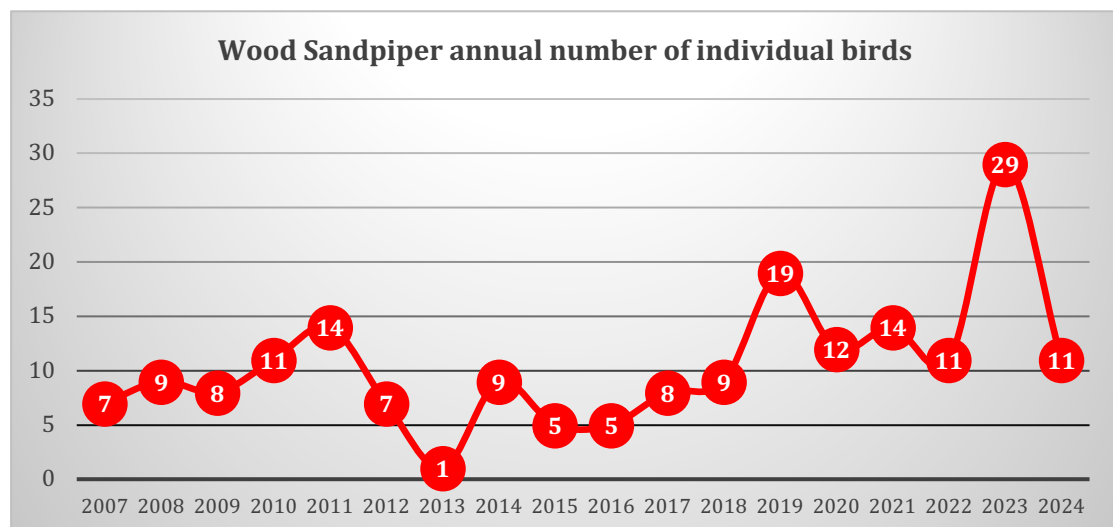
No early year records with the first on June 20th then one or two in July – August with one from September 9th – 13th and one 28th. As shown in the chart this was the worst year since 2011 for records of this species which again reflects the loss of wader habitat around the site.



Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

April 26th – October 28th

A rather poor year compared to the recent run. Spring produced only two records one on April 25th – 27th and one May 11th. Four on June 24th was an odd occurrence with two to 26th then two July 27th and single juveniles August 2nd and 12th – 16th.



Adult Wood Sandpiper April 2024

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

April 18th – October 27th

An early bird on April 13th was followed by one or two on three dates from May 11th – 16th with the only autumn records being one August 3rd and two September 21st.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

There was a run of records in May after the first on 11th with a maximum of four on 12th then six on 25th while the autumn produced one record of three on August 21st.



Summer adult male Turnstone May 26th 2024

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

Only two records this year with a first-summer from May 10th – 13th and a different bird of the same age on May 15th.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Two adults flew over on April 13th with four adults moving west the following day and another two adults in breeding plumage flew west on May 4th.



Adult summer Mediterranean Gull May 5th 2024

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

The flooded fields attracted a feeding concentration of c150 birds from May 7th – 15th.

Common Gull *Larus canus*

Birds feeding on the flooded fields in spring built up to 40 on February 23rd and 60 on March 15th.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Just a few records during March – September.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Odd birds on a few dates but nothing of note.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*

Up to five usually present around Trent Falls and occasionally over the western Flats.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

A new bird for the site a Gull-billed Tern flew around on the Trent Flash briefly on the morning of the June 14th before flying off south only to be re found in Nottinghamshire two days later. Sadly, it was not seen again.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Two on May 11th – 12th with singles on a few dates in July formed another poor year for this species.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

Spring passage saw a flock of 26 birds drop onto the Trent Flash for a short spell on May 4th before flying off north towards the Humber.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*

Up to ten birds were on the outer Flats on a few dates typically perching in the line of dead hawthorns across the western site.



Stock Doves July 2024

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*

A regular small presence with occasional influxes on the outer Flats numbering up to 100 birds.

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

April 13th – August 17th

The first male was not heard until May 4th with two birds the following day then one or two males were fairly regular to June 8th with at least one female being seen but there was again no actual proof of breeding. A juvenile was seen on July 18th.



Male Cuckoo June 2024

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Up to four between January and March with three on May 24th suggesting local breeding but scarce again in the autumn and late winter.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Odd birds heard from the trees around the sewage works and typically a few territories on the adjacent hillside.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Single birds on April 1st, May 6th, July 20th, October 4th and 25th none of which lingered suggesting vole numbers on site were low.

Swift *Apus apus*

April 25th – September 16th

A slightly better year for Swifts on site after the first on April 24th there were peaks of 28 May 16th, 60 on 24th then 100 25th and 250 on 31st. The summer was though pretty poor with 20 on July 12th being the highest count and the last two were seen on September 10th.



Common Swift June 2024

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

A good run of records this year with one or two being regular during January and February then one April 14th with singles again May 6th – 11th and June 8th hinting at a possibly local breeding record but not on the site. One or two were again fairly regular from August to December.

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

The usual birds on the adjacent escarpment often wandered down onto the edges of the Flats and at least one juvenile fledged this year being seen in the oak strip with an accompanying adult in July – August. One or two regular again in November – December.



Green Woodpecker December 6th 2024



Adult and juvenile Green Woodpeckers July 2024

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Odd records in the dead tress at the foot of the escarpment and the remains of the dead copse during the year.

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

No breeding bird survey but the number of nesting birds was clearly greatly reduced by the deep flooding that continued through to June.



Skylark in very wet field in area 6 May 2024

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

March 8th 2008 – October 30th 2023

The forerunner of the spring passage was a single bird on March 17th with 80 present by the 25th, a good total for March. April saw up to 600, 26th, birds on site feeding over the pools and reedbeds. Autumn passage was late starting with the first notable count of 120 on August 21st and a short-lived peak of 1000 on 26th. A total of 14 was counted on September 10th and the last of the year was a single on October 1st.



Sand Martins on fence line of field 7M April 2024

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

March 31st 2021 - November 12th 2015

The dire status of this species continued through 2024. The first was seen on April 5th but the spring peak was just 40 on April 24th and it seemed that only two or three pairs bred at the stables a tragic decline. Autumn passage was almost non-existent with a maximum of just 50 birds on September 10th though 15 lingered to October 4th and the last two of the year were seen on 11th.



Male Swallow April 2024

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*

April 1st 2021 – October 19th 2020

House Martins are suffering a more serious decline than Swallows and this was reflected in the sparse occurrences on the Flats this year. The first on April 5th was followed by spring peaks of just ten on April 24th and 16 on May 24th with 20 on September 29th being the only autumn record of note.

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Certainly, declining as a breeding bird though no survey was undertaken there were clearly far less territories on the foreshore and just odd singing birds in the internal fields where flooding persisted through the late spring. A count of 60 on October 7th was also the only autumn passage flock of note.

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*

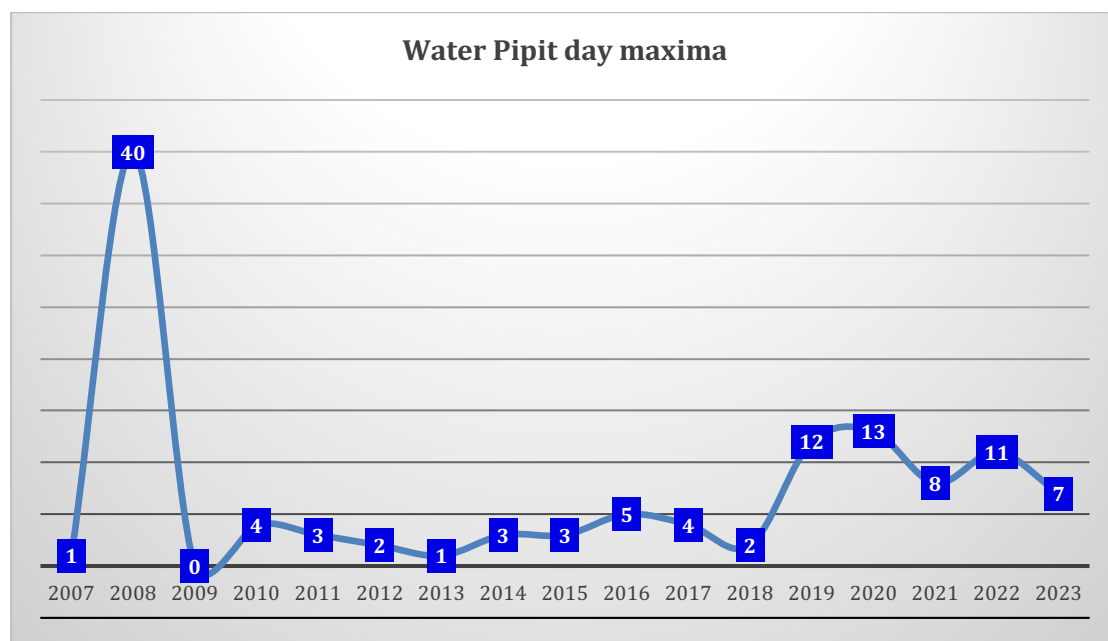
Three on January 7th was the only record in the first winter period with none in the autumn.



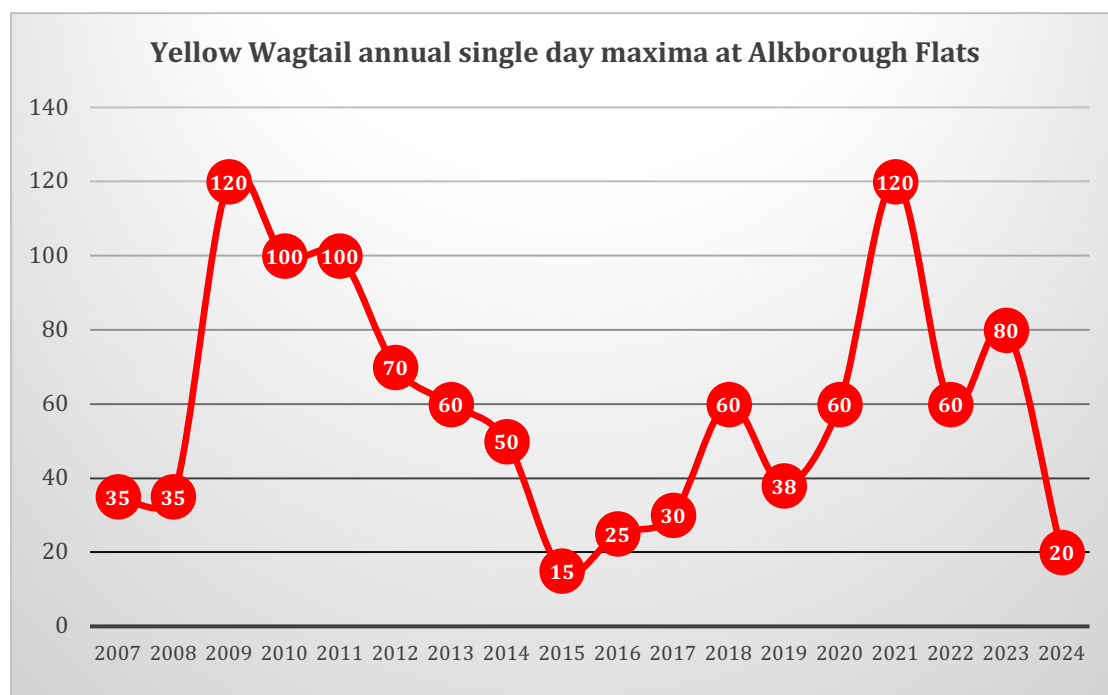
Rock Pipit January 2024

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*October 10th – March 31st

A count of six on January 1st proved to be the highest of the year with no more than three seen through to the last two of the spring on April 7th. The first four of the late winter arrived on October 7th but this number was not exceeded until the year end.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Montacilla flava*March 23rd 2024– October 8th 2024

Like the hirundines the fortunes of Yellow Wagtails are in steep decline with no breeding or territory holding birds again. Spring saw an early bird present from March 23rd to April 1st forming. A new early migrant date for this species. The peak day of spring passage was April 19th with 20 birds present but this proved to be the last decent count of the spring. Autumn birds arrived from July 27th but the maximum count was a paltry 14 on August 26th. A late bird lingered from October 3rd – 8th also extending the extreme dates of occurrence with the previous latest bird being seen on October 4th.



Grey Wagtail *Montacilla cinerea*

Birds were present in the sewage works from January with a pair then nesting in the culvert by the lower park where they fledged two young in ate April. There was no proof of a second brood with a gap in sightings from late May to September after which birds again became regular.



Fledged juvenile Grey Wagtails in lower car park April 2024



Male Grey Wagtail lower car park trees March 2024

Pied Wagtail *Montacilla alba*

A total of 30 were feeding on the drying mud by the main hide on August 8th with 18 on September 4th.

White Wagtail *Montacilla alba alba*

A restricted passage saw nine birds on the outer Flats from April 13th – 14th with two from 17th – 26th.



White Wagtail April 2024

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

The usual concertation of birds occurred in the expanding reedbeds in autumn and winter with no breeding bird survey undertaken.



Wren November 2024 wintering in the reedbeds

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Birds on the outer Flats during the spring and autumn when there appeared to be a small passage of birds in October.



Dunnock on outer Flats November 2024

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Up to four birds appear to be resident in the hedges on the outer Flats with pairs breeding there and others were scattered along the scrub lines ditches on the edge of the reedbeds in autumn and winter.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

April 17th – November 16th

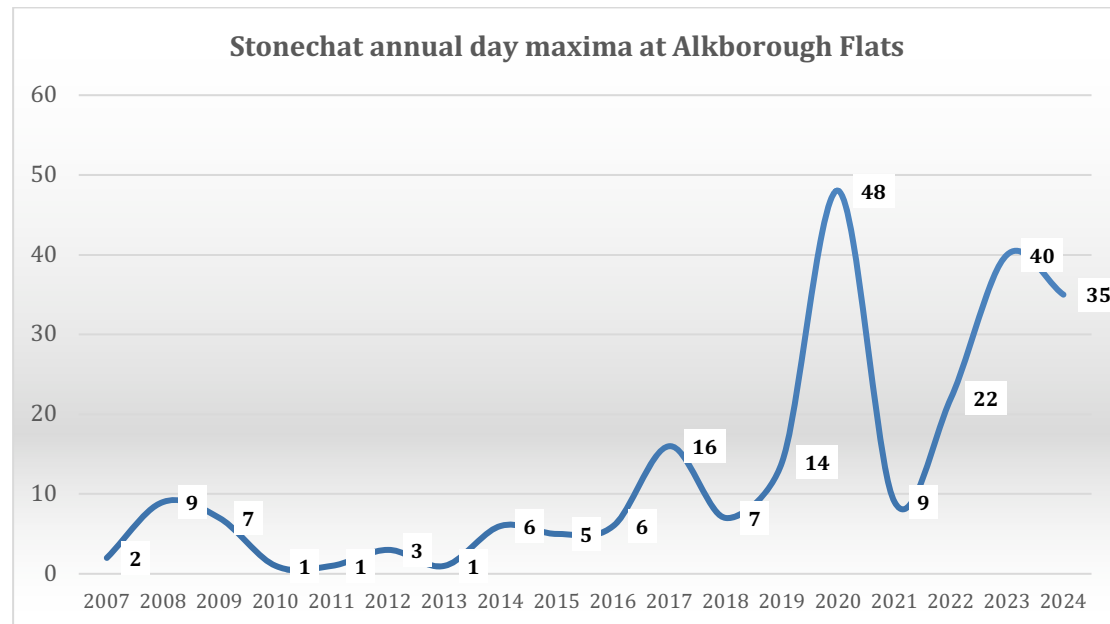
There was a surprisingly good passage of this declining species in the autumn but how many individuals were present is impossible to tell. A spring male on April 17th was the first at that season since 2026! Four birds on August 11th was a notable record and there were then almost daily records of up to five birds through to September 14th with presumably some turnover of individuals. Singles on September 18th and October 3rd were then followed by three on October 8th and the last from October 10th – 11th.



Whinchats August 2024

Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*

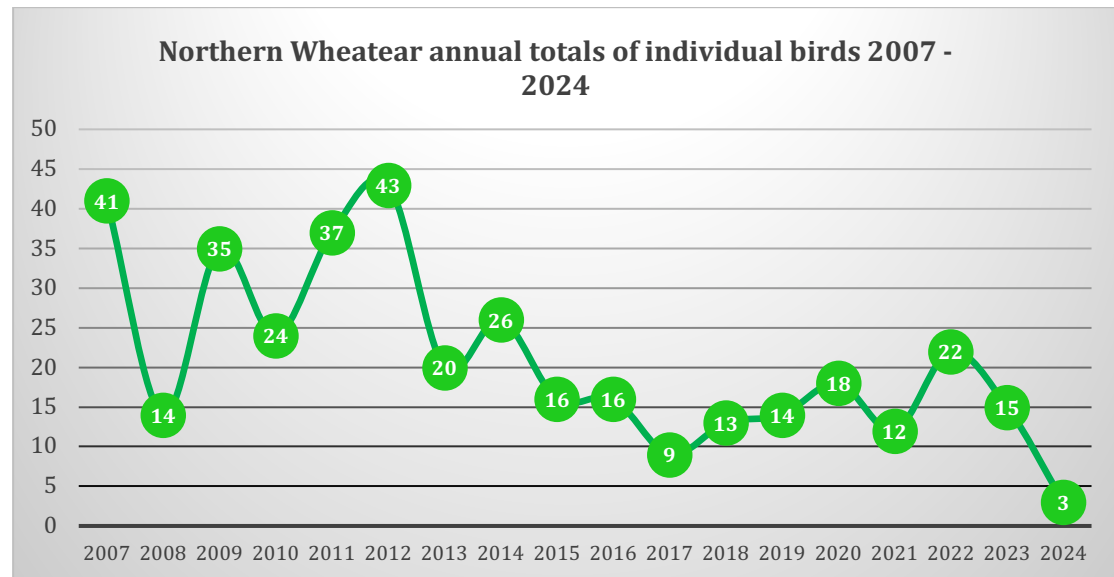
No more than six were located in January but spring passage starts early in this species and two apparently new males were on site on 13th with 10+ counted on 18th but this passage was brief though and only four could be found on 23rd. Two pairs were present in March and one pair bred on the hillside behind the Tower hide but their attempt failed. A new male arrived on May 18th but there were then no further records until two juveniles arrived on August 12th a fairly typical date for dispersing juveniles. Up to three juveniles were then seen to late September when autumn passage saw a rise to 14 birds on September 28th with subsequent peaks of 26 on October 3rd and 35 on the 8th. Numbers then fell with c10 birds in late October and November but no more than five in December.



Male Stonechat February 2024

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe Oenanthe*March 21st – October 25th

One of the worst years on record for this species with just three records a male April 13th with another 14th and a female on the unusual date of June 11th but none in autumn.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

The usual records in the early year with an arrival of wintering thrushes seeing a count of 24 on November 5th.



Blackbird immigrant November 2024

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*October 7th – May 5th

In the early winter 22 on January 7th and 60 February 17th were notable with spring passage producing a count of 100 on March 2nd and 60 on 23rd. First f the autumn were not until late October with 10 on November 5th the first obvious flock.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Three continental birds occurred on November 5th during a marked thrush arrival.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

October 7th - April

Spring passage was poor with a peak of just 30 on March 2nd and the last eight on the 5th. First of the autumn were two October 12th with a notable 250 in the thorn hedges on November 5th.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

No breeding bird survey was undertaken but incidental observations suggested that most of the 30 territories recorded in 2023 were occupied again.



Male Cetti's Warbler September 2024

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

April 8th 2020 – September 6th 2021

The first two singing males arrived on April 13th but there were never more than five males all summer and at least two sang very sporadically the last being heard on July 28th.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

April 2nd 2021 – October 12th 2024

April 1st produced the first male of the spring and there were at least 40 males on May 10th suggesting a similar breeding population to 2023 but no survey was carried out. A late bird was present from October 11th – 12th forming a new latest record for the site.



Juvenile Sedge Warbler August 2024

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

April 14th 2020– October 12th 2009 and 2024

An early songster was recorded on April 12th but the number of singing birds seemed for incidental observations to be well down on recent years. Three on October 8th and one 11th – 12th were the last of the autumn.



Juvenile Reed Warbler August 2024

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

A singing male was noted on March 26th and the usual two or three pairs bred at the base of the escarpment. Birds slipped away in the autumn without record.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

A male was singing by the lower car park from May 31st to June 1st with presumably the same bird moving to the Island in Area 4 where it continued to proclaim a territory from June 2nd – 20th.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

April 15th 2007 – September 18th 2024

Three arrived simultaneously on April 20th and there were three again on May 8th with one male holding a breeding territory from May 13th – June 3rd. One in autumn on September 18th on the outer Flats was the latest ever by one day.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

April 11th 2020 – September 30th 2017

The first did not arrive until April 14th and there were never more than four birds all spring and summer in a truly dismal year for this once common breeding bird. Four were still on the outer Flats on September 13th with the last on the 18th.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

At least one wintered around the sewage works with a male in song from March 1st to 5th. True spring arrivals appeared from mid-March with six on 14th and a notable 15 on 26th. A good early autumn passage saw 10 counted on August 30th and September 9th with 20 on 18th after which there were a few birds in late September and October.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

April 5th 2020 – October 10th 2024

One on April 5th with two 10th and a peak of four on 26th preceded the establishment of four breeding territories that were occupied from May 4th to at least June 1st. Two dispersing juveniles were on the outer Flats on July 18th and there was a very good autumn passage with 10 on August 8th then 20 on 16th and a record-breaking 40+ on the 17th. Numbers then fell

quickly with two on the 29th and a late bird was seen on October 10th almost a month later than the previous latest record on September 19th 2013.



Willow Warbler August 2024

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Odd birds in the scrub at the base of the escarpment with four on November 5th.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

One by the lower car park on September 9th.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

No breeding bird survey was undertaken but the number of pairs appeared to be down on 2023 particularly in the new reedbed and the Whitton end of the site. The first fledged juveniles were not seen until June 3rd with a flock of 20 juveniles noted on July 7th. The autumn saw some good irrupting movements with a total of at least 100 birds on the tracks on September 18th after which numbers fell away during October and November.



Bearded Tits September 2024



Bearded Tits on hide path October 2024



Female Bearded Tits gritting September 2024



Unusual dark eyed adult male Bearded Tit September 2024

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Flocks noted feeding in the reedbeds, mainly by the lower escarpment in most months of the year.



Long-tailed Tit feeding in reedbed January 2024

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

A few recorded feeding in the reedbeds with birds in spring foraging in the new reedbed and taking food to nests in the oak strip suggesting a mis match of invertebrate abundance in the oaks that was being replaced with an alternative food resource albeit with more energy required to obtain the food and longer flights to and from the feeding areas.



Blue Tit feeding in reedbed March 2024

Great Tit *Parus major*

No notable records.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

One singing in the oak strip in spring – autumn.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

No records away from the hillside where birds appeared to be scarcer than usual in 2024.

Magpie *Pica pica*

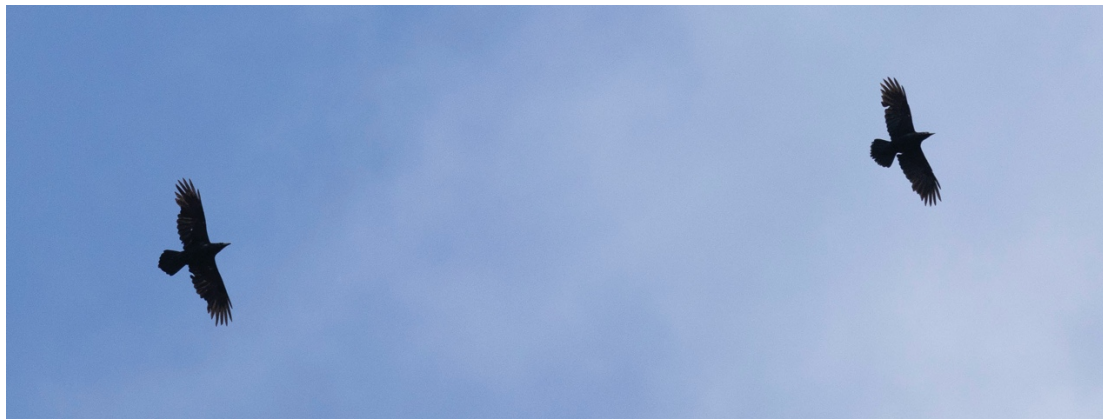
Odd birds ventured onto the outer Flats but mainly recorded along the adjacent hillside.

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Up to 40 were foraging on the grass fields in the summer and autumn.

Raven *Corvus corax*

A record-breaking year for this species with one or two birds recorded in every month except February and a pair of immature birds clearly being resident in the local area through the spring and summer. A party of seven birds on August 28th was exceptional and formed a new high count for this species.



Pair of immature Ravens April 2024 – these two birds were in the area for several weeks

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

A few birds fed on the wet grass fields in spring.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

No survey of breeding pairs but numbers looked similar to 2023. Up to 40 birds fed on the drying grass fields in the spring.

Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix*

The second bird to be recorded on the Flats following one on April 22nd 2020 was found on the unseasonal date of June 2nd and it stayed in the drying wet grass fields with Carrion Crows until 3rd.



Hooded Crow field 7M June 2024

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

No large roost congregations at either end of the year but up to 1000 birds feeding on the wet grass fields from June thorough to the year end.



Juvenile Starling moulting to first-winter Area 4 August 2024

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

A former breeding species this is now a rare visitor to the site probably from nearby Blacktoft Sands where several pairs breed. One on August 10th with three on 27th and one October 22nd formed the year's quota.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

A few records from the foot of the escarpment.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

One on the outer Flats on October 14th flew off south.

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

A flock of 46 birds was feeding on the sea club rush on January 1st but numbers fell thereafter with no more than 11 in the following winter period. A family of four birds was in the lower car park on May 24th. Recorded again on the sea club rush from October with a peak of 40 on November 5th.



Greenfinches November 2024 by the breach

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Recorded regularly from July onwards feeding mainly on the thistle seeds with a peak of 80 on October 22nd.

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*

A few flocks passed through with 22 feeding on the alders by the lower car park on February 9th and small flocks again fed in the various groups of alders from October onwards.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

At least 70 roosted in the scrub on the islands in Area 4 in January. No breeding bird survey but there appeared to be less birds than in recent years and there were no large early autumn flocks in contrast to 2023.

Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*

Not recorded until October 27th when one was noted in a very poor year for this species around North Lincolnshire.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

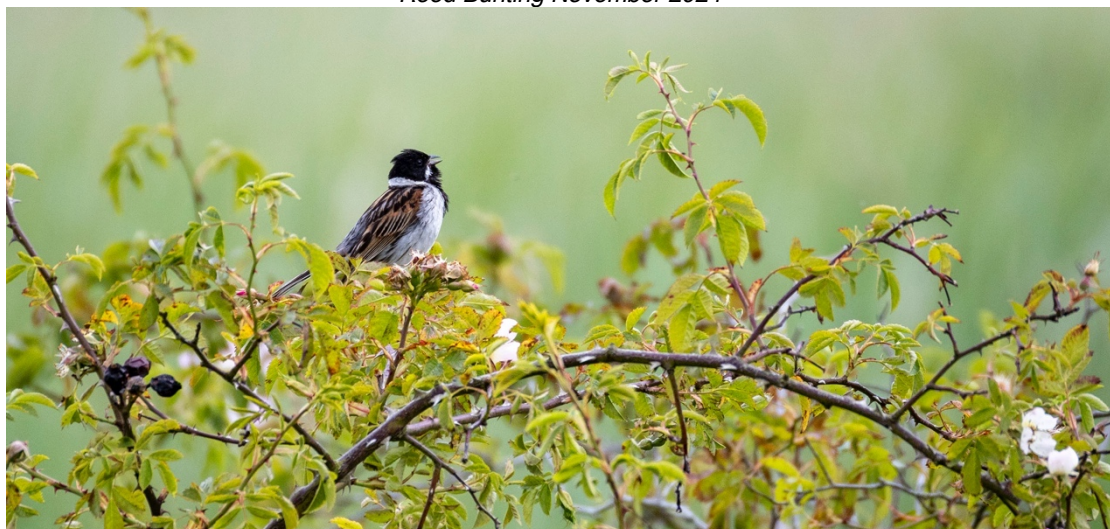
Odd records in the scrub and trees at the base of the escarpment.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Good numbers appeared to be breeding but no survey was carried out. The autumn and late winter though, failed to produce any notable flocks.



Reed Bunting November 2024



Male Reed Bunting June 2024

Butterflies:

It was another dismal year for butterflies on the Flats, with very few exceptions. Following the drought of the previous summer and extensive winter flooding and a cold and wet spring most species were reduced to pitiful numbers.

Extreme dates for all butterfly species recorded at Alkborough Flats 2007 - 2024

	Earliest date	Latest Date
Small Skipper	June 21 st	August 3 rd
Essex Skipper	July 8 th	August 3 rd
Large Skipper	May 29 th	July 15 th
Clouded Yellow		
Brimstone	March 17 th	June 13 th
Large White	June 21 st	September 29 th
Small White	April 8 th	October 11 th
Green-veined White	March 23 rd	October
Orange-tip	April 15 th	June 16 th
Purple Hairstreak	August 7 th	August 7 th
Small Copper	May 10 th	October 8 th
Brown Argus	May 26 th	September
Common Blue	May 20 th	September 20 th
Holly Blue	April 24 th	August 28 th
Red Admiral	March 22 nd	November 12 th
Painted Lady	May 19 th	October
Small Tortoiseshell	March 2 nd	October
Peacock	March 18 th	November 22 nd
Comma	March 18 th	October 23 rd
Speckled Wood	April 14 th	October 6 th
Wall Brown	April 27 th	September 22 nd
Marbled White	July 18 th	July 25 th
Gatekeeper	July 4 th	August 3 rd
Meadow Brown	June 9 th	August 3 rd
Ringlet	June 18 th	July 23 rd
Small Heath	May 15 th	July 6 th



Notable records, positive and negative, were as follows:

Essex Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*

One on July 28th marked a dramatic reduction in this species on the Flats.

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

First recorded on March 31st with subsequent singles on odd days through to May 10th; a very poor year.

Orange-tip *Anthocharis cardamines*

After the first on April 19th there was a late peak of 10 between May 8th and 10th making it one of the more successful species in the year.

Purple Hairstreak *Favonius quercus*

At least four were in the oak strip on July 28th and the species probably occurs there in decent numbers every year.



Purple Hairstreak July 28th 2024

Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Only a couple of records.



Small Copper May 10th 2024

Brown Argus *Aricia agestis*

One on August 30th was the sole record of the year.

Common Blue *Polymmatas icarus*

A single record of two on August 27th formed an atrocious showing for this formerly regular grassland species.



Common Blue August 27th 2024

Holly Blue *Celastrina argiolus*

None in 2024.

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

No more than five on a day.



Red Admiral July 23rd 2024

Painted Lady *Vanessa (Cynthia) cardui*

No records in 2024 summed up the recent status of this migratory species.

Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae*

Two on March 26th were the first of the year but the daily maximum was only 14 on May 10th and the summer and early autumn were abysmal with hardly any records of this formerly common species.



Small Tortoiseshell July 23rd 2024

Peacock *Inachis io*

At least five emerged from hibernation on March 26th following which there were two peaks of 14 on May 10th and July 28th with a latish individual on October 22nd.

Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria*

An early individual on April 17th with very few records thereafter.



Speckled Wood June 12th 2024

Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*

Two on May 10th with four on May 11th then singles on August 3rd and 4th shows the species is still present but it was a very poor year.



Wall Brown August 4th 2024

Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

A good count of 40 on July 18th.



Gatekeeper July 23rd 2024

Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*

No counts of note.

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

A count of 30 on July 12th was the only day of note.



Peacock newly emerged July 28th 2024



Green-veined White April 22nd 2024

Odonata:

It was another poor year for most odes on the Flats the second such season in a row but there were odd exceptions.

Interesting records:**Common Spreadwing** *Lestes sponsa* (Emerald Damselfly)

Continued presence on the Humber embankment with hatching probably sourced in the adjacent beds of juncus. Three on July 12th and three again on 16th in brief spells of good weather.



Male Common Spreadwing July 16th 2024



Female Common Spreadwing July 16th 2024

Western Willow Spreadwing *Lestes viridis* (Willow Emerald Damselfly)

The only record was of one by the drain at the eastern end of the oak strip on the late date of October 14th.



Western Willow Spreadwing October 14th 2024

Common Bluetail *Ischnura elegans* (Blue-tailed Damselfly)

This species actually had a good season in the new reedbed area with the first two on May 3rd then 100+ on 8th with 300+ 10th and 500+ 13th – 15th.



Teneral Common Bluetail June 1st 2024

Azure Bluet *Ceriagrion puella* (Azure Damselfly)

Like the previous species the main emergence was in early May with 80+ on 10th and 170 on 21st mainly in the new reedbed area.



Pair of Azure Bluets May 26th 2024

Large Redeye (Red-eyed Damselfly) *Erythromma najas*

Two on May 13th was the only record.

Small Red-eye *Erythromma viridulum* (Small Red-eyed Damselfly)

After singles on July 12th and 18th there were at least 40 on the 27th the highest ever count.



Small red-eye July 18th 2024

Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

One on May 6th with two 8th and four 10th all on the new reedbed and adjacent ditches.



Large Red Damselfly May 10th 2024

Moorland Hawker *Aeshna juncea* (Common Hawker)

Continuing the recent run of records a male was by the alders at the base of the escarpment on July 28th in the general area where individuals have been seen in a number of previous years.

Hairy Hawker *Brachytron pratense* (Hairy Dragonfly)

A record-breaking year with the first two seen on May 3rd but Hobbies were taking more high up and this habit continued through ensuing warm days with an estimated 100 taken by Hobbies on 8th and the last seen on 25th.



Pair of Hairy Hawkers May 22nd 2024

Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*

After the first two were seen on May 8th a total of 105 were noted emerging on the 10th with much larger numbers clearly being involved as up to five Hobbies were feasting on the emergents.



Four-spotted Chaser May 10th 2024

Broad-bodied Chaser *Libellula depressa*

A female on June 14th and male on 20th were the only records.



Female Broad-bodied Chaser June 15th 2024

Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*

One June 14th then a large emergence with 60 June 20th and a peak of 500 27th with 300 counted on July 28th.



Teneral Ruddy Darter June 15th 2024

Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

The first two were on June 20th but it was a fairly poor autumn for the species.



Male Broad-bodied Chaser June 20th 2024

Mammals:

The usual regular species were recorded with several Roe fawns seen during the spring and several sightings of Muntjac. Two earths of Red Fox and the usual Badger sets were present and Otters were seen in a number of areas throughout the year. The odd Brown Hare was also seen and there were a number of sightings of Weasel one of which had predated a Water Vole. An early Noctule was hunting on March 26th.



Roe fawn August 31st 2024



Buck Roe Deer June 2024



Weasel with Water Vole August 20th 2024



Cumberland Slider a presumably released terrapin in the ditch by the main track September 2024

Following two bumper years there were no Bee Orchids seen in 2024 but a few Pyramidal and Southern Marsh Orchids were noted.

Graham Catley
January 2025