



WBC Sightings Report 2021

Compiled by Richard Walden

January

The first day of January is traditionally the day when many birders like to get out in the field and start their year lists, little did everybody know how short-lived this freedom would be this month. Those who got out early in the month were able to see 25 Tundra Bean Geese at Wenhaston, present since the 7th December their stay in to 2021 lasted just two days. Other sightings of Tundra Bean Geese during the month came from Minsmere and Dunwich on the 9th, where 7 were tracked flying north. European White-fronted Geese reports came from the Blyth estuary with 28 on the 7th and Reydon with 25 on the 29th, the biggest counts by far though were c650 at North Warren on the 15th and presumably the same flock at Aldeburgh town marshes on the 25th and 30th. On the 1st a flock of 100 Pink-footed Geese were observed flying in off the sea at Benacre, another 2 birds discovered at Aldringham on the 3rd remained until the 28th at least. A solitary Pale-bellied Brent Goose was observed on Aldeburgh town marshes on the 30th. Winter swans were mostly reported from coastal sites, maximum counts were 8 Whooper swans west over Wrentham on the 2nd and a maximum of 4 at Minsmere during the month, Bewick's swans were reported from Minsmere and Hinton with a maximum of 4 at both sites, further inland another 4 were at Gillingham on the 19th. The Long-tailed Duck at Covehithe Broad extended its stay in to 2021 remaining until the months end at least, another two were seen on the sea at Dunwich on the 9th. 6 Velvet Scoter were seen offshore at Dunwich on 2nd with a single bird being seen with c250 Common Scoter at the same place on the 6th. The now regular flock of wintering Goosanders in the Thorpeness/Minsmere area peaked at 15 on Thorpeness mere on the 4th, the only other species of sawbill duck reported was a Smew at Minsmere on the 31st.

A Red-necked Grebe was discovered on the south scrape at Minsmere on the 22nd and remained until the end of the month, this species is far from annual in north-east Suffolk these days. Much more regular in the area now is Glossy Ibis, one frequented the flooded marshes at Barsham on the 25th and 26th. Great Egrets were reported from a few sites on several days with the maximum count being 3 at Dunwich. Traditional winter raptors were very thin on the ground this month, a few lucky observers caught up with Hen Harrier, ring-tails being seen at Oulton Broad, Reydon, Walberswick and the Minsmere area whilst a male was at Aldeburgh marshes on the 15th. A juvenile Common Crane was at Walberswick on 8th before flying off north, it was seen later the same day flying north at Reydon and on the 9th was present at Rushmere. The only wader reports concerned Purple Sandpiper with 3 at Ness point, Lowestoft on the 3rd and a single at Southwold on the 11th-13th, Green Sandpipers at Blythburgh and Barsham and 2 Spotted Redshank at Dunwich on the 21st. A Great Skua was offshore at Dunwich on the 2nd whilst a first winter Iceland Gull was seen in the Lowestoft harbour and Lake Lothing areas very infrequently during the month, a 3rd calendar year Caspian Gull was at Minsmere on the 24th. The only report of Short-eared Owl was one at Minsmere on the 9th.

The male Eastern Yellow Wagtail continued to frequent Peto's marsh at Carlton marshes on a few dates throughout the month, Water Pipits were also reported from here (3) and at Minsmere (2). A single Firecrest was seen at Aldeburgh on the 15th. Hawfinches were recorded on several dates around Sotterley and Ellough with c25 at the former on the 15th and c20 at the latter on the 18th. At Minsmere 5 Common Crossbills were seen on the 18th, further up the coast at Dunwich 8 Twite and 16 Snow Buntings were seen on the 9th.

February

February is generally a quiet month and this year, with the added restrictions of lockdown, was no exception. There were fewer reports of geese this month the only notable reports involving European White-fronted Geese, 12 at Homersfield on 11th with 9 remaining until the 15th and c500 at Aldeburgh town marsh on the 21st. Winter swan records were mainly centred around the greater Minsmere area with maximum counts of 4 Whooper Swans at Minsmere and 7 Bewick's swans at Hinton, at the flooded Barsham marshes 14 Whooper Swans arrived on the 1st and remained until the 28th. At Minsmere the redhead Smew continued throughout the month, Goosander numbers declined this month with the maximum count reported involving 9 at Minsmere on the 17th. Scaup records involved a drake at Benacre broad 24th – 28th and a female at Minsmere on the same dates, Pochard is an increasingly scarce species in the area covered in this report so 15 (9 drakes) at Barsham was pleasing. The drake Long-tailed Duck remained at Covehithe broad throughout slowly moulting to become a very smart bird, 9 Velvet Scoter were reported offshore from Aldeburgh on the 11th.

Representatives of the three scarcer grebe species were recorded this month with Red-necked Grebe at Minsmere 1st – 21st, Black-necked Grebe offshore at Benacre on the 16th and Slavonian Grebe at Breydon water on the 5th and 23rd. 2 Shags were seen on Lake Lothing on the 21st. Great White Egret sightings continue to increase with several reports of single birds the maximum single site count being 3 at Dunwich on the 20th, Spoonbills began to reappear in the area this month with 5 at Aldeburgh on the 23rd and 3 at North Warren on the 27th. Raptor reports mainly involved Red Kites, Peregrines and Hen Harriers with the latter species being seen mainly in the Minsmere area, the star of this particular show was an immature White-tailed Eagle in the Blythburgh/Westleton area on 27th and 28th, last seen flying north over the Hen Reedbeds on the last date. 2 Common Cranes were seen at Walberswick on the 21st and what was almost certainly the same two birds flew over Reydon on the 23rd. Reports of waders remained low, 7 Purple Sandpipers at Ness Point on 16th and Spotted Redshank and 2 Ruff at Barsham on the 22nd being the best. The cold snap mid month saw a predictable increase in reports of Woodcock escaping the bitter conditions across north Europe, a sad downside to this was the high counts of tideline corpses reported of this and other species which perished in the North Sea. The first winter Iceland Gull in the Lowestoft area continued to be seen sporadically particularly around Gunton, the same or another bird was seen at Covehithe on the 4th. Caspian Gulls continued to be seen mainly at coastal sites and adjacent pig fields, Little Gulls were seen at Southwold on the

14th (1), Kessingland on the 21st (1) and Benacre on the 16th (2). Short-eared Owl reports came from Walberswick on 11th and Westleton Heath on the 28th.

Snow Buntings were seen at Aldeburgh/North Warren and Kessingland, highest tallies being 3 at North Warren on the 7th and 11 at Kessingland on the 21st. Hawfinches continued to be seen in the Sotterley area though remained generally elusive, 21 on the 15th and 14 on the 22nd. 9 Common Crossbills were seen perched briefly in a small roadside tree at Ellough on the 20th, 8 Twite were along the beach at Dunwich on the 20th. A single Black Redstart was seen at Kessingland on the 18th/19th and 28th, a Water Pipit was seen at Covehithe broad from mid month with 2 at Dingle marshes on the 20th. Those looking hopefully for signs of an impending spring may take pleasure from the sighting of a Sand Martin seen over Peto's marsh at Carlton marshes on 27th.

March

The male Eastern Yellow Wagtail continued to frequent Peto's marsh at Carlton marshes on a few dates throughout the month, Water Pipits were also reported from here (3) and at Minsmere (2). A single Firecrest was seen at Aldeburgh on the 15th. Hawfinches were recorded on several dates around Sotterley and Ellough with c25 at the former on the 15th and c20 at the latter on the 18th. At Minsmere 5 Common Crossbills were seen on the 18th, further up the coast at Dunwich 8 Twite and 16 Snow Bunting were seen on the 9th.

Wild swans still figured in several reports this month, especially from the Minsmere area where a small number of both Whooper Swans and Bewick's swans were reported, three Whooper Swans remained at Barsham marshes on the 1st but had departed the next day and 5 were at Carlton marshes on the 6th. European White-fronted Geese were still present in the area but in reduced numbers, peak counts were 30 over Benacre (2nd), 250 at North Warren (7th), 62 at Walberswick (9th) and 32 at Reydon (14th). An adult Taiga Bean Goose was discovered in fields adjacent to the Hen Reedbeds on the 9th, a very rare bird around these parts. Associating with Greylag Geese it remained until the end of the month, well past the date that this species usually departs the British Isles. Velvet Scoter continued to be seen on the sea off Dunwich in various small numbers, counts being 3 (7th), 4 (9th), 2 (15th). The drake long-tailed Duck remained at Covehithe Broad all month, just north of here at Benacre Broad two drake Scaup were present on 4th until the 14th. The redhead Smew continued to be reported sporadically during the month at Minsmere, peak count of Goosanders was 5 at Aldeburgh marshes on the 26th. The first Garganey of the year was a drake at Minsmere on the 26th, with 2 drakes present on the 31st.

Seabird reports this month featured mostly passage Gannets and the occasional Fulmar. A Shag was at Lake Nothing on the 7th. Great Egrets continued to be reported from several localities but a count of 12 leaving their roost site at Carlton marshes on the 6th is an amazing record. Spoonbills also began to feature this month at sites from Carlton marshes to North Warren, peak count being 5 at the latter site on the 27th. Mid month saw a large movement of Red Kites through the area, counts of 4 together over Leiston and 5 together over Wrentham on the 14th being most notable. White-tailed Eagles featured hugely (Pun intended!) in reports this month, it appears that at least two birds were involved, one from the Isle of Wight reintroduction scheme and the other(s)

wild. Reports came from several localities and on several dates starting at Carlton marshes on the 15th and involved mobile birds generally flying north or south. Hen Harriers were also seen on several dates and mostly involved ringtails though males were seen at Reydon on the 19th and Covehithe on the 24th. Common Cranes are always an exciting and uplifting sight, 11 over Brandeston early on the 5th had reduced to 9 by the time they arrived at Minsmere when they were then tracked north along the coast. Two more were seen at Minsmere on the 9th, and then tracked south last being seen over North Warren, 3 over Benacre on the 24th and a single passed up the coast on the 25th.

A total of 18 Purple Sandpipers at Ness Point, Lowestoft on the 2nd was a good total, though this was surpassed on the 9th when 24 were counted. Spotted Redshanks were seen on the river Alde at Snape and at the Hen Reedbeds, 6 Ruff at Barsham on the 3rd, 4 Jack Snipe were at the Dingle marshes on the 9th and a Little Ringed Plover at Kessingland on 12th. The first winter Iceland Gull continued to be seen in the Lowestoft area throughout the month and another was seen at Minsmere on the 15th, a Little Gull was at Minsmere on the 31st and Caspian Gulls were reported mainly from Southwold, Minsmere and Sizewell. A Short-eared Owl at Blythburgh on the 25th was the only report of this species during the month.

The first Northern Wheatear of the year was seen at Minsmere on the 25th, 2 Water Pipits and 2 White Wagtails were at Southwold on the 9th, 7 Twite at Dunwich also on the 9th, 5 Snow Buntings at Kessingland on the 19th, 18 Hawfinches in Sotterley park on the 2nd, Common (Mealy) Redpoll at Minsmere on the 28th, 2 Firecrest at Aldeburgh on the 26th and a Swallow at North Warren on the 15th. Finally, the one that got away involved a probable Alpine Swift reported between Sizewell and Thorpeness on the 31st.

April

April was a rather cool month dominated by winds from a northerly direction, migration was slowed to a bare trickle but increased towards the end of the month. Garganey began to appear early with several reports from various sites, peak counts were 4 on Peto's marsh at Carlton marshes on the 3rd and 3 at Minsmere on 6th. The overwintering Long-tailed Duck on Covehithe broad was last reported on the 2nd, 6 Velvet Scoters flew south off Covehithe on the 8th. The Taiga Bean Goose in the Reydon/Hen reedbeds area was reported up to the 13th, casting doubts on its authenticity as a wild bird. Red-throated Divers were in evidence offshore for most of the month with a strong passage off Corton on the 9th with 3000+ north in one hour, Black-throated Divers were seen flying north off Southwold on 10th and 25th. A strong northerly passage of Gannets also occurred on 9th off Corton with c1200 in one hour, two first winter Shags were seen on the groynes along Lowestoft North beach on the 17th.

This month saw fewer reports of Great Egrets, peak counts were 3 at Dunwich on the 18th and 5 at Carlton marshes on the 21st and 22nd. Reports of Cattle Egrets increased however with one at Framlingham on the 10th, a summer plumaged adult at Bungay on the 17th and 2 in the Carlton and Oulton marshes area 21st – 24th. A single Spoonbill was at Minsmere 12th – 13th. White-tailed Eagles continued to roam the skies over Suffolk earlier in the month, on the 4th one toured north over Minsmere, Dunwich, Benacre and Carlton marshes and presumably the same bird was seen over the North denes at Lowestoft on the 6th. Goshawks were seen over Minsmere on 13th and

Southwold on 24th, a migrating Rough-legged Buzzard was seen over Buss creek marshes, Reydon on the 27th. Raptor of the month was the Black kite seen over Peto's Marsh at Carlton on the 29th, presumably the same bird was at North Warren on the 30th where it spent a short time perched on the marshes before flying off south over Aldeburgh. Common Cranes were also very much in evidence this month, which is never a bad thing, a few records from mainly coastal locations with maximum counts of 3 south over Dunwich on the 7th and 3 south-west over Carlton marshes then Benacre on the 27th. Most notable amongst this months wader reports were 2 Grey Phalaropes with one at Minsmere 7th – 10th and another at Southwold town marshes 8th – 12th, a handful of Wood Sandpipers were seen with 3 at Carlton marshes on the 30th, a month maximum of 8 Purple Sandpipers were seen at the Ness point, Lowestoft on the 15th.

Reports of skuas were understandably few this month with Great Skuas at Covehithe and Southwold and a Pomarine Skua at the latter site, all on the 25th. Several Little Gulls were reported with 3 first summer birds at Carlton marshes on the 20th, the long-staying Iceland Gull remained in the Lowestoft area until the 14th. The first Sandwich Terns (3) returned to Minsmere on 2nd and the first Little Terns (2) also at Minsmere on the 21st, Arctic Terns were also on the move with Carlton marshes bagging the lions share, the impressive Peto's marsh played host to 7 on the 21st. The only report of a marsh tern concerned a single Black Tern seen along the river Waveney at Castle marsh on the 29th.

Swifts began to trickle in at the tail end of the month with 2 at Carlton marshes on the 25th, this reserve just keeps attracting the birds with a Hoopoe discovered by the visitor centre late on the 29th which then promptly disappeared. April proved to be a good month for Wrynecks with one at Gunton on the 13th, one along Breydon south wall on the 21st, one in a private Kessingland garden on the 25th and one in Southwold on the 26th. Notable passerines during the month included several Ring Ouzels with 2 at Westleton heath on 25th, 3 at Walberswick on 29th – 30th and 2 at Worlingham marshes also on the 30th, 6 Black Redstarts were at Kessingland sluice on the 4th. The first singing Nightingale for the year in our area was at Westleton heath on the 12th, a Pied Flycatcher was reported from a garden near Bungay on the 1st and a Hooded Crow was seen on Aldeburgh town marshes on the 29th.

May

Wildfowl records were sparse this month, two Garganey at Minsmere on the 15th and a Pink-footed Goose at Reydon on the 22nd were the pick. May is not usually a month associated with a lot of action offshore so four Manx Shearwaters south off Dunwich on the 21st, followed by three south at the same location the next day was of interest. There were several reports of Common Cranes and Spoonbills during the month, five Common Cranes over Dunwich (29th) and five Spoonbills at Minsmere (8th) being the maximum counts. The only other heron of note was a Cattle Egret at Carlton marshes on 25th. Raptors stole the show this month with a few sightings of Black Kite which possibly concerned the same individual, on the 2nd over Reydon at 13:50 and later over Carlton marshes at 16:50, on the 3rd over Carlton marshes again and on the 5th over Minsmere. Some sightings of Honey Buzzard mid month may also have concerned the same individual, on the 13th over Minsmere at 11:30 then over Aldeburgh at 11:57, on the 14th over Dunwich heath. A White-tailed Eagle was reported over Kessingland on the 23rd, a ringtail Montagu's Harrier was at Tinkers marsh Walberswick on the 25th and

an Osprey at Minsmere the same day, another Honey Buzzard was seen over North Warren on the 26th.

A couple of exceptional wader sightings occurred during the month, the first involved a summer plumaged Buff-breasted Sandpiper on Peto's marsh at Carlton marshes on the 6th-7th, visiting birders were treated to the rare sight of seeing this bird displaying. Not quite so rare but again another interesting record involved a summer plumaged Pectoral Sandpiper at Minsmere on the 18th. A Curlew Sandpiper on Peto's marsh on the 6th-7th though nice to see was much more expected at this time of the year. On the 8th a Pomarine Skua was seen off Thorpeness and on the 21st a Great Skua was seen off Dunwich, on the 22nd a Puffin flew past Dunwich and Southwold.

On the 1st a fairly elusive Hoopoe was present near the visitor centre at Carlton marshes, just down the road at Worlingham marshes the same day three lovely Ring Ouzels were sharing a meadow with some departing Fieldfares. A Wryneck was reported at Kessingland denes on the 9th and a Grey-headed Wagtail was seen at Southwold on the 11th. A very flighty Woodchat Shrike spent the afternoon of the 28th on the south denes at Kessingland, a Bluethroat was reported at Goleston on the 8th. On the 17th a Golden Oriole was heard by the Canopy hide at Minsmere, on the 25th-26th an elusive first summer male Golden Oriole was singing around the South belt at Minsmere. A female PiedFlycatcher was seen in the sluice bushes at Minsmere on the 3rd and a Wood Warbler was singing at Southwold sewage works on the 15th.

Just a stones throw outside the recording area along the river Alde at Iken there was a trio of rarities at the same location starting with a Kentish Plover on the 3rd-4th, a Broad-billed Sandpiper on the 5th-6th and a Caspian Tern on the 14th.

June

Reports of Purple Herons featured at the beginning and at the end of this months sightings, on the 5th a first summer was seen at Carlton marshes and an adult was seen further down the coast at Walberswick, the latter bird being seen infrequently until the 9th, a probable was also reported at Minsmere on the 6th. At the end of the month a first summer Purple Heron was reported daily at Minsmere 24th-29th, on the 4th six Common Cranes flew west over Reydon and on the 6th at the same location three White Storks were reported flying north. On the 5th a first summer male Red-footed Falcon was discovered at Westwood marshes Walberswick and remained until the 7th, an Osprey flew south over Dunwich on the 4th and a Honey Buzzard flew north at Minsmere on the 13th. A Collared Pratincole tracked north over Minsmere and Southwold before settling to spend the day at Peto's marsh at Carlton marshes on the 12th, at the end of the month a Red-necked Phalarope spent the day at Minsmere on the 30th where two days before 13 Spotted Redshanks were counted. Roseate Tern was another species which featured heavily in this months reports starting off with a single bird at Minsmere on the 7th, numbers fluctuated throughout the month peaking at an amazing total of five together on the 25th. There was also a scattering of reports of Arctic Terns, mainly at Minsmere, throughout the month where a Black Tern was also present on the 25th. A first summer Caspian Gull on the scrape at Minsmere was this months only notable gull report. Two European Bee-eaters flew north over Aldeburgh 12th, the next day on the

13th a flock of 9 European Bee-eaters flew south-west over Carlton marshes, a few days later what was obviously the same flock of nine birds was discovered at Great Yarmouth where they entertained many admirers on the 21st-22nd. A male Red-backed Shrike spent the day in an area between Dunwich and Westleton on the 5th and a Golden Oriole flew north over Minsmere the same day. A Rose-coloured Starling was a nice find in the Common Starling roost at Hamilton dock Lowestoft on the 10th, sadly it was a one off and was not subsequently seen despite searching. Finally a singing male Common Rosefinch was briefly present at Southwold boating lake on the 7th.

July

July is normally a quieter month but still able to throw up the occasional surprise. On the 9th a drake Scaup was discovered on Benacre broad, this increased to two on 13th-17th. On the 1st a Cattle Egret flew south over Minsmere whilst another was present at Carlton marshes on the 3rd along with four Great Egrets plus one at North Warren on the 6th, another Cattle Egret flew south over Minsmere on the 18th and what was possibly the same bird flew south over Sizewell on the 20th. At the close of the month a Purple Heron was seen at Carlton marshes, Two Manx Shearwaters past Southwold and a Sooty Shearwater past Minsmere on the 30th, are hopefully signs of more to come over the next couple of months. Reports of scarcer raptors were few and far between during the month, most notable were a White-tailed Eagle reported over Bradwell on the 4th and a Black Kite at Wangford on the 13th. A Red-necked Phalarope remained at Minsmere on the 1st having been present the preceding day, fifteen Spotted Redshanks were counted at Minsmere on the 14th, star wader of the month though was a White-rumped Sandpiper present at Minsmere 19th-23rd with two Curlew Sandpipers there on the 23rd and a Pectoral Sandpiper present there on the 31st. An Arctic Skua flew past Southwold on the 30th, on the 16th an unseasonal juvenile Glaucous Gull was seen on the Blyth estuary on the 16th and on the same day twelve Little Gulls were seen at Minsmere. Roseate Terns and Arctic Terns continued to be reported in ones and twos at Minsmere during the month with three Black Terns present there on the 20th, two Roseate Terns flew north past Lowestoft on the 1st. Bird of the month, at least for those who saw it, was an adult Gull-billed Tern present for about one hour on Minsmere scrape on the morning of the 26th, the bird departed to the north late morning and was then relocated feeding over Peto's marsh at Carlton marshes in the afternoon where it remained for about one and a half hours. Oddity of the month was a House Finch discovered on the bird feeders at Dunwich coastguard cottages on the 2nd, this North American species soon attracted a few admirers but disappointment was just around the corner when it was discovered to be sporting a green leg ring, this fugitive from an aviary then relocated to Southwold where it remained through the month, obviously a better class of sunflower hearts in Southwold.

August

August is the month when migration starts to become evident, particularly waders and seabirds. Starting off with wildfowl the only reports of note concerned a Ruddy Shelduck on Southwold marshes 22nd-23rd and three Velvet Scoters north off Thorpeness on the 27th. The first Sooty Shearwater appeared offshore on the 18th at Corton, this was followed by a Balearic Shearwater south at Minsmere on the 23rd with another or the same seen off Thorpeness with a Storm Petrel also being seen there. More Sooty Shearwaters were reported as follows, Thorpeness on the 27th, Corton on the 28th, Lowestoft and Southwold on 30th. On the 12th a Black Stork was seen over Snape maltings, what was almost certainly the same bird was tracked down the Suffolk coast from Lowestoft to Shotley on the 14th. A Purple Heron was seen at Carlton marshes on the 2nd, Spoonbills at Hazelwood marsh peaked at 34 on the 9th. A Glossy Ibis was at Walberswick on the 13th, Minsmere 14th-20th and Botany marsh, Snape 23rd-31st, three Great Egrets were at the latter site on the 24th. Raptor reports were few, Honey Buzzard north at Kessingland and Osprey north over Lowestoft, both on the 14th and Osprey at Minsmere on the 28th. A typically elusive Spotted Crake was seen at Botany marsh, Snape on the 19th.

Minsmere's second White-rumped Sandpiper of the year was present 1st-10th, occasionally it was seen in the company of a Pectoral Sandpiper which was present 1st-11th. Curlew Sandpipers were also seen at Minsmere on a few dates with occasionally two birds present, Wood Sandpipers at Carlton marshes peaked at three on the 15th and nine Little Stints were at Tinker's marsh, Walberswick on the 31st. The end of August produced a rush of reports of Long-tailed Skua as follows, singles at Southwold and Minsmere on 26th and Thorpeness 27th, three at Corton and Kessingland and two at Southwold and Thorpeness on the 28th, singles at Corton and Southwold on 30th. Arctic Skua counts peaked at five off Lowestoft and fourteen off Southwold on the 28th, maximum count of Great Skuas was four at Thorpeness on 27th. Lucky sea watchers at Southwold were treated with a Caspian Tern offshore on the 24th, Arctic Terns and Black Terns featured on several sea watching lists with maximum counts of ten Arctic Terns off Southwold and four Black Terns off Thorpeness on the 28th. Roseate Terns were seen on Minsmere scrape on 2nd and north past Lowestoft on 31st. 194 Mediterranean Gulls were counted at Corton new sewage works on 18th, thirty Little Gulls were offshore at Kessingland on 14th, two Caspian Gulls at Walberswick on the 15th and a first summer was seen on the Blyth estuary on 21st. The bulk of scarcer passerine reports involved mainly Pied Flycatchers, Common Redstarts and Whinchats. Most notable reports involved a Bee-eater over Minsmere on the 18th an Icterine Warbler, also at Minsmere, reported in the dunes on the 13th, Wryneck at Gunton Warren on the 22nd.

September

The only wildfowl report of note for September involved a Pale-bellied Brent Goose on Minsmere scrape on the 13th. On the 19th two Red-necked Grebes were seen off Thorpeness. This was the month when sea watching really kicked off, most notable was a rash of Cory's Shearwater reports starting with a single south off Minsmere on the 1st, the rush though occurred on the 14th as follows, southwold south at 07:38, Thorpeness north at 08:03, Minsmere north at 08:10 with probables also being seen at Dunwich north at

08:29, Southwold north at 08:30 and Covehithe north at 09:25. Sooty Shearwater reports were also numerous with singles on several dates, multiple reports were two north at Southwold (3rd), two north at Lowestoft, two north at Minsmere, three north at Covehithe, six north at Thorpeness and seven north at Southwold all on 14th, four south at Minsmere on the 30th. There was only one record of Manx Shearwater during the month, a single north at Southwold on the 26th. Spoonbill numbers at Hazelwood marshes rose steadily throughout the month and peaked at a remarkable 38 on the 22nd. Raptor reports were well up on the previous month, the most notable was an incredible 72 Common Buzzards seen flying south at Kessingland between 13:22 and 14:30, a Honey Buzzard flew south over North Warren on 28th. The rivers Blyth and Alde always play host to Ospreys at this time of the year, a single was on the Blyth 16th-21st and a single was on the Alde throughout the month though rising to three birds present on the 24th. The most interesting wader reports included four Curlew Sandpipers at Hazelwood marshes on the 2nd, Pectoral Sandpipers at Carlton marshes 19th-20th and Minsmere 20th-29th. A Grey Phalarope was at Hazelwood marshes on the 30th and a Dotterel was reported on the beach at North Warren on the 15th. On the 3rd a juvenile Sabine's Gull flew north past Minsmere at 16:42, this bird was then subsequently seen off Southwold at 17:05, Kessingland at 17:25 and Lowestoft at 17:57, sixteen Little Gulls were off Thorpeness on the 6th. Long-tailed Skuas were reported on five dates during the month, the only multiple report was of two off Thorpeness on the 14th. A Pomarine Skua flew south at Thorpeness on the 19th and small numbers of Arctic Skuas and Great Skuas were seen on a handful of dates. A Wryneck was seen at Kessingland on the 7th and a juvenile Red-backed shrike was at Minsmere 22nd-25th. Wood Warbler at Dunwich heath on the 12th, Greenish Warbler at Thorpeness old caravan park on 2nd and four Whinchats at Lowestoft on the 4th.

October

What a disappointing month October proved to be with relatively low numbers of both common and scarce migrants. A slight increase in wildfowl reports over last month, most tantalising was a possible Red-breasted Goose which flew south off Minsmere on the 7th. A few skeins of migrating Pink-footed Geese were noted, largest totals being c500 over Lowestoft (15th) and c750 over Barsham (23rd). A Velvet Scoter was noted north past Minsmere and then amongst a Common Scoter flock off Dunwich (15th), nine Whooper Swans flew over Carlton marshes (22nd), Tundra Bean Goose south at Lowestoft (10th), Smew at Minsmere (31st) and nine Goosanders on Thorpeness mere (31st). A Great Northern Diver was seen close inshore off Benacre on the 27th, a Slavonian Grebe was seen on a reservoir at Aldringham on the 16th. October is usually a good month for sea watching but mainly unfavourable winds prevailed, seabird reports were as follows, two Sooty Shearwaters south at Minsmere (2nd), south past Southwold (12th), north past Minsmere (15th), Manx Shearwater reports were north past Minsmere (15th) and north past Lowestoft (23rd). A Shag flew south at Benacre on the 27th. A Cattle Egret was noted amongst cows at Eastbridge on the 5th, it then commuted between here and Minsmere until the 17th. Another or the same Cattle Egret was seen further south at Botany marsh, Snape on the 18th-20th and four Great Egrets were counted on the Alde estuary (15th). Three Ospreys were again counted on the river Alde at Hazelwood marsh on the 3rd, Merlins were noted at North Warren on the 3rd and 11th. Wader reports were on the decrease through October with an adult Lesser Golden Plover species seen at

Hazelwood marsh on the 3rd, Pectoral Sandpiper at Carlton marshes 10th-17th, three Purple Sandpipers at the Ness point, Lowestoft on the 22nd. After the glut of records of Long-tailed Skua over the past two months October produced only one, a single north off Lowestoft on the 23rd. The only outstanding gull record for the month concerned a third winter Glaucous Gull, first observed in pig fields at Reydon it was later seen to fly off towards the Blyth estuary 9, two Caspian Gulls were at Minsmere on the 17th. Strong winds in the North Sea are normally responsible for displacing Little Auks which, if lucky, can then be seen trying to reorientate. This month's observations all involved single individuals which were as follows, Sizewell, Minsmere, Southwold and Lowestoft all on the 23rd and south at Benacre on the 26th. On the 23rd a very probable first winter Eastern Yellow Wagtail was seen on Peto's marsh at Carlton marshes, a single Shorelark was at Hopton on the 11th. In previous October's reports of Yellow-browed Warbler have been almost too numerous to record individually, this is this year's reduced crop, Gunton Warren (6th), Lowestoft (7th), Thorpeness (8th), Lowestoft, Carlton marshes, Gunton and Dunwich (all 9th), Lowestoft and Orford (10th) Lowestoft and Southwold (15th), Waveney forest (16th), Kessingland (17th) and Pakefield (24th), the latter bird sharing the same bushy gully with this month's only Pallas's Warbler. Radde's Warblers appear to almost annual in Suffolk these days and one was present on the cliff slope at Lowestoft north dunes on the 9th-10th, a Siberian Chiffchaff was seen at the same location on the 13th. Two Lapland Bunting's flew over Aldringham on the 16th and began to arrive from the 23rd, single at Lowestoft (23rd-25th), three at Kessingland (24th), four at Minsmere (24th) increasing to six (27th).

November

Winter wildfowl began to appear during this month with reports of Whooper Swans and Bewick's Swans, five of the former seen at Minsmere and seven of the latter at Covehithe being the peak counts. Sea watchers were treated to several sightings of Velvet Scoter with four drakes south together at Southwold then Minsmere on the 22nd being the highest count. Common Scoter and Eider were also very much in evidence, 171 of the latter were counted passing north at Southwold on the 22nd. A couple of Long-tailed Ducks were also reported including a fine drake north off Southwold on the 28th. Four Greater Scaup were seen off Southwold on the 29th, a female Red-crested Pochard was at Minsmere 13th-16th and five Goosander were at Thorpeness meare on the 21st. Twenty-one Tundra Bean Geese flew over Carlton marshes on the 21st, sixty-three European White-fronted Geese were counted at North Warren on the 25th and Six Pale-bellied Brent Geese flew north past Lowestoft on the 22nd. Divers also featured in many reports particularly towards the end of the month, Red-throated Diver was far and away the most numerous but there were a few reports of Great Northern Divers and a couple of Black-throated Divers. North winds blowing down through the North Sea produced some late seabirds with two Manx Shearwaters and a Sooty Shearwater off Southwold on the 22nd and a Leach's Petrel north off Lowestoft the same day. A first winter Shag was seen in Lowestoft harbour on the 29th. At the beginning of the month a Glossy Ibis was seen around Minsmere 1st-8th and was also seen at Walberswick on the 7th. A quiet month for raptors with Hen Harrier seen at the Alde estuary (23rd) and a Goshawk at Reydon meare (11th). Reports of waders were also few this month, Jack Snipe and Spotted Redshank were seen and there six Purple Sandpipers at the Ness Point on the 20th, a Grey Phalarope was just offshore at Kessingland on the 23rd. A

second winter Glaucous Gull was doing the rounds during the month, 6th until the 24th at least, it was most reliably looked for in Southwold harbour on the Walberswick wall but was also seen on the Blyth from the Hen reedbeds and at Minsmere on one occasion. An Iceland Gull was reported flying south past Minsmere on the 10th, also at Minsmere three Caspian Gulls on the 18th and four Yellow-legged Gulls on the 26th. North winds occasionally during the month and particularly storm Arwen were responsible for reports of Little Auks from several coastal locations, highest single day count was six off Southwold on the 22nd. A quite rare bird in Suffolk, Puffin was also reported on a few dates with a high count of five, again at Southwold on the 22nd, this was definitely 'auk day' for sea watchers. Watching owls arriving over the sea is always an exciting and awe inspiring event, there were a handful of reports of 'in off' Short-eared Owls and a couple of Long-eared Owls, one at Lowestoft on the 5th which took refuge in a tree by the north denes and one at Southwold on the 22nd. Shorelark is an annual winter favourite and reports included one on the beach at Minsmere on the 12th, followed by two on the east scrape on the 16th with one remaining until the 19th and a single at Kessingland 19th-21st. Three late Swallows flew south at Walberswick on the 19th and amongst the Water Pipit reports, seven at North Warren on the 24th was the most notable. Two Ring Ouzels were seen to fly in off the sea at Kessingland on the 14th. Bird of the month for many was a first winter female Pied Wheatear discovered on the beach in front of Sizewell A power station on the 14th, it remained on the beach for about an hour before disappearing in to the inaccessible compound of the power station frustrating many late comers. Black Redstarts were seen in reasonable numbers mainly at their usual haunts, peak being six at Ness Point on the 9th. Another contender for bird of the month was a Hume's Warbler discovered near Beach farm at Benacre on the 25th, very elusive on occasions but patience would be rewarded with good views, this bird was last seen on the 29th. Two Siberian Chiffchaffs were also at the same location by Beach farm and others were reported at Southwold on the 14th and 21st. A Yellow-browed Warbler was present at the old caravan park at Thorpeness on the 5th-7th, the same or another on the 15th and another at Southwold campsite on the 8th, one reported at Walberswick on the 9th could have been the Southwold bird hopping across the river. Firecrest at Dunwich on the 9th wraps up the warbler reports. At least one Raven was touring the area during the month with reports from the Minsmere and Westleton area and Beccles on the 7th. Up to four Twite were along the beach between Dunwich and Walberswick rewarding anyone taking the trek across the shingle, a Hawfinch was reported from Aldeburgh on the 3rd. Lapland Buntings were seen at Walberswick (2nd), North Warren (23rd) and Benacre (27th). Most reports of Snow Buntings came from their two main winter strongholds at Kessingland and Dunwich/Walberswick with peak counts of sixty-three at the former (8th) and twenty-five at Walberswick (26th).

December

The Minsmere area was pretty much the only place to view winter swans as the year came to its end, Whooper Swans were seen about the reserve on several dates with a maximum of 7 on the 29th. What almost certainly involved the same party of birds took up daytime residence along Lymball's Lane at Westleton towards the months end, with a maximum of 9 birds reported here. Bewick's Swans were scarcer with 8 on the South scrape on 24th and 7 on the Island Mere on the 29th, a further 16 flew west over Bungay on the 11th. Winter geese were also rather scarce this month, a single Tundra Bean

Goose flying over Aldeburgh town marshes on 22nd being the best, 280 European White-fronted Geese were counted at North Warren on the 21st. 2 Velvet Scoters flew north at Southwold on the 3rd, possibly the same birds also flew north past Walberswick the next day, another 2 flew north past Southwold on the 25th. The usual wintering population of Goosanders were seen mainly at Thorpeness meare and Minsmere, the maximum being 10 at the former site on the 14th. A female Smew was observed flying up the river Alde on the 11th, this was the only report of this popular sawbill. Generally game birds do not feature much in these monthly roundups, so with no reports of Capercaillie in Dunwich forest the best was a covey of 10 Grey Partridges at Beccles on the 5th. Red-throated Divers are pretty much resident off the Suffolk coast this time of year, the occasional Great Northern Diver was reported offshore and one which was seen on the river Alde on the 9th remained throughout the month. A Slavonian Grebe was seen on Covehithe broad on the 11th before flying out to sea. The 5th witnessed a coastal movement of Shags with the following totals recorded, 8 at Southwold, 4 at Minsmere, 4 at North Warren and 2 at Slaughden, although this may involve a small amount of duplication. A Cattle Egret was present on Aldeburgh marshes from the 11th remaining until the end of the month and being joined by a second on 30th-31st, Great Egrets were reported from several sites with 2 normally present at Dingle marshes. There were very few reports of raptors, most notable was a ringtail Hen Harrier seen on at least five dates towards the end of the month at Westleton heath, this appears to be following a pattern of a bird present here last winter leading to speculation that it could be the same bird, a male Hen Harrier was reported at Sibton on the 24th. Wader reports for the month included a Grey Phalarope at Aldeburgh marshes 1st-2nd, an unseasonal Curlew Sandpiper at Hazelwood marsh on the 30th, 3 Jack Snipe at Flixton gravel pits 19th and 6 Purple Sandpipers at the Ness point, Lowestoft on the 20th. The only gull reports for the period involved an Iceland Gull at Oulton Broad on the 5th and at Lake Lothing on the 18th, with a juvenile Glaucous Gull at Minsmere 30th-31st. At Oulton Broad a Little Auk was present 5th-7th affording many people very close views of this northern waif, elsewhere Little Auks were reported passing offshore at Thorpeness (1st), Minsmere (2nd), Lowestoft (5th). Much rarer was a Black Guillemot which flew north past southwold on the 5th with a Puffin north on the 7th, also at Southwold. A single Short-eared Owl was seen over the Corporation marshes at Walberswick on the 17th. A Shorelark was present on Kessingland north beach 12th, another at Walberswick also on the 12th and a third at North Warren on the 22nd. Water Pipits were seen at Sizewell levels, Aldeburgh marshes and Easton broad. A Hume's Warbler was discovered at the southern end of North Warren on the 26th-27th and several Siberian Chiffchaffs were discovered as follows, 2 at Leathes Ham, lowestoft (19th), Carlton marshes (28th) with 2 there (30th) and Southwold sewage works (31st). Ravens were seen on Slaughden beach on the 19th and 2 reported at Sibton on the 24th. Twite were seen on several dates at Dunwich/Dingle marshes during the month mainly involving 2 to 5 birds although 14 were reported on the 30th, at Sotterley 11 Hawfinches were seen on the 20th. Snow Buntings featured strongly in December with maximum counts of 30 at Kessingland (12th), 18 at Dunwich (15th), 20 at Aldeburgh marshes (22nd) and c50 at Kessingland (22nd). Finally a Lapland Bunting was present on Kessingland north beach 17th-21st.