



Reserve Opening Times:

Wednesday: 10am - 4pm  
Saturday: 10am - 4pm  
Sunday: 10am - 4pm

Trustees:

Richard Fuller - Treasurer  
Alan Patchett  
David Nesham  
John Brook  
Graham Barlow  
Ian Willoughby

Company Secretary - Peter Murphy

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### Illustrations:

Cover photograph - Little grebe and chick by Barbara Murphy  
Colours photos of *Dytiscus* larva and lunar hornet clearwing by Jerry Knapp. Other photographs by Barbara Murphy

## **Introduction**

2012 was of course dominated somewhat by the construction of the Fish Pass and while contractors had to carry out some further work this summer we were able to do our first guided walk for the public on 8th June. As we suspected, not only will the Fish Pass make fish migration much easier but it has also created a valuable new and totally different habitat on the reserve. It looked tailor-made for dippers which are now scarce birds in the Leeds area. Sure enough, the dippers duly arrived as did another species which likes this type of habitat - the grey wagtail, one pair even staying to breed. Guided walks are now taking place on the last Sunday in every month and we are grateful to Yorkshire Water plc for providing a splendid new interpretation board which has been sited by the gate to the Fish Pass.

Our own volunteers have also been involved in some substantial projects this year. In the spring they constructed a permeable hard path from the Mike Sheldon Hide to the Willow Path Hide. The grass path here has been getting very muddy and slippery in recent winters and this path has made access much easier and safer for wheelchair users and anyone less agile on their feet. We are grateful to Green Leeds Ltd for providing the funding for this project. Thanks to an award from the Lloyds Bank Community Fund in the autumn we will be able to continue this path from the Willow Path Hide to the Reedbed Hide in the new year.

A new patio area with more seating outside the Visitor Centre was also completed in the spring. Another spring project was the planting of a small area of rowans, silver birches, wild cherries and bird cherries to the right of the new path to the Reedbed Hide. In June we were able for the first time to carry out the final preparation and sowing of Tim's Field ourselves thanks to new equipment for the tractor, again funded by a grant from Green Leeds Ltd. In view of the continued failure of the pollen and nectar mix on part of the field it is planned next year to sow the whole field with the winter bird seed mix which has proved so beneficial for the birds thus far.

Another big project was started in the autumn - the construction of an artificial sand martin nesting bank on the far side of the Lagoon. Sand martin colonies along the River Aire have struggled in recent years and have frequently been flooded out. Last year was particularly bad for them. Purpose built nesting banks have been very successful at other wetland locations and with our ability to control water levels on the Lagoon this one should provide a safe and secure site from flooding. The project has been made possible thanks to a generous grant from Caird Peckfield Ltd. Despite poor ground conditions the project was ahead of schedule at the end of the year and the next phase will be to concrete the front and sides in January. It is planned to have the bank operational when sand martins arrive back in March.

2013 has certainly been a year of highs and lows for wildlife at Rodley. A pair of little owls bred on the reserve for the first time in 2012 but the female was found dead in May this year. Barn owl, however, had its best year ever with some excellent sightings on the Scrubland. After a blank year in 2012 the pair of kestrels raised two young at the barn owl box in the compound and at least four pairs of swallows nested successfully in the old dumper truck shed.

On the wetlands it looked like being our best breeding year to date for common terns with possibly as many as five pairs nesting but a day of intense mink activity on 30th June saw every nest predated. Tufted ducks and coots too suffered badly at the hands of mink with tufted ducks failing to raise any young for the fourth year running and coot numbers their lowest for many years in the autumn. Two pairs of gadwalls did manage to evade the mink, successfully raising a total of 17 young. At least one pair of water rails also nested successfully for the second year running.

An exciting development this year has been the start of our harvest mouse breeding programme, this with a view to releasing a number of animals on the reserve in 2014. Two tanks of mice have been put on display in the Visitor Centre to enable visitors to see these tiny mammals up close and they have proved amazingly popular - and not just with children. You can read more about this project elsewhere in the report.

As regards events, we again had a stand at the Science Fair at Leeds City Museum on Saturday 23rd March despite thick snow on the day. We ran our usual full programme of events for the public at the reserve. Our spring wildlife event on Saturday 8th June enjoyed a lovely sunny day and was again well supported. The two Bat Nights on Saturday 20th July and Saturday 10th August were also blessed with pleasant dry evenings and had their usual enthusiastic following. The main fund-raising event each year is, of course, the Summer Fair. This was held on Saturday 17th August and, unfortunately, endured one of the few less pleasant days in what was generally a very nice month. It stayed mainly dry but a freshening wind from lunchtime curtailed activities around 2.00pm with gazebos and the bouncy castle in danger of taking off. Our other fund-raising event, the Pie and Peas Day, was extended this year to include some wildlife activities and a visit to the Fish Pass and we were lucky to pick one of the few dry and less windy days in what was the wettest month of the year. Other events included our annual Fungus Foray, two bird walks and small mammal surveys.

One of the Trust's stated objectives is to advance the education of the public in the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of wildlife and this is especially important as regards children. The popularity of the reserve as an educational resource continues to grow. Our hard working volunteers looked after 25 primary school classes and 14 visits from uniformed organisations this year and in the main the weather was kind. During the school summer holidays weekly moth trapping events on Wednesdays were particularly aimed at involving children and getting them close to nature as were the small mammal surveys. We are also starting to see more older students coming to the reserve to carry out project work and we continue to forge strong links with Leeds University, Leeds City College and Askham Bryan College.

Rodley Nature Reserve could not survive without the support of its hard working volunteers. On Mondays and Fridays our outdoor volunteers enjoyed a rather better summer but they still had to endure some cold, wet and windy days. In addition to the one-off projects already described there were the annual tasks, such as willow coppicing, fence building, balsam "bashing", ragwort removal from the meadows and a host of other building, painting and repair jobs.

We are grateful to them all. We are also grateful to volunteers from TCV, Groundwork Leeds, Leeds RSPB Local Group, BEES and Leeds City College for their working days.

In addition to organising fund-raising days and entertaining school groups and uniformed organisations the Friends of Rodley Nature Reserve also look after the manning of the Visitor Centre. For many of our regular visitors Rodley Nature Reserve has become almost a second home and much of this is down to having a warm welcome and a friendly face behind the counter. We have had some amazing letters and e-mails this year about the friendliness and helpfulness of our volunteers. As I said in last year's report, and it needs saying again here, we have created something very special at Rodley. Long may it continue.

Editor

## Rodley Nature Reserve - Monthly Roundup for 2013

### January

There was a very mild start to the year with daytime temperatures reaching 11°C but with mainly grey skies. It started to get a lot colder from 9th with the first snow of the year falling during the evening of 13th with further snow on 14th. Daytime temperatures struggled to exceed zero and nighttime temperatures fell as low as minus 12°C. Further snow on 18th, 20th and 21st left a good six inches on the ground. A further three inches fell overnight on 25th but a night of heavy rain on 26th saw the snow virtually gone by the next day. Strong to gale force westerly winds were the main feature in the last few days of the month with heavy rain at times and temperatures reaching 12°C on 29th.

The snowy conditions provided an excellent opportunity to see just how much mammal activity there was at night on the reserve. Fox tracks were everywhere and roedeer were much in evidence. On 15th a fox was seen carrying a male pheasant in the Coppice and on 22nd foxes were seen on the Willow Path (2), by the weir and on the John Ackroyd Meadow (2). On the down side, the old male fox "Stumpy" was found dead in the Lagoon on 9th.

With the Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh frozen over from 15th good numbers of wildfowl congregated on the part of the Lagoon that remained ice-free with many birds flying in late in the day. Tufted duck numbers reached 50 towards dusk on 20th with up to three goldeneye and three pochard some days. Wigeon were present daily with 24 on one date being the highest ever January count. Gadwall numbers fluctuated but with at least 20 daily and a maximum of 44. A great crested grebe was reported on six dates between 12th and 20th. Thirty-six teal were on the Lagoon on 27th. Goosanders gathered on the Lagoon towards dusk to socialise with up to 25 birds recorded. There were also regular sightings of up to five on the river.

Water rails were typically hard to spot but there were sightings on five dates. A water rail survey on 14th revealed four calling birds, three of these on the Lagoon. Twenty-four snipe were accidentally flushed during a WeBS visit on 13th and 12 during the water rail survey on 14th. Kingfishers are always hard to find in January but one was reported in the Reedbed on 26th.

There was a movement of pink-footed geese early in the month with 150 flying over on 2nd, c80 on 6th and 108 on 7th - all flying in a westerly direction. Canada geese numbers built up considerably this month with up to 110 on the farmland. Up to 28 greylag geese were also seen on the farmland.

On Tim's Field the linnet flock was helped by a supplementary seed feeding scheme that started this winter. Up to 105 were reported. Fieldfares were seen most days, usually on the farmland or in the poplars. Numbers fluctuated considerably with usually 50 birds or less but with as many as 120 on occasions. Redwings were harder to find with a best count of just nine.

Other sightings this month included a woodcock over the Lagoon on 1st, two goldcrests by the Lagoon Hide and two in the Manager's Garden on 5th, single lesser redpolls on 9th and 12th, siskins on four dates with up to nine reported, a peregrine falcon close to the Visitor Centre on 23rd and a red kite on 26th and 29th.

Lapwings were seen on seven dates with up to 50 on the farmland and a best count of 120 high over the Coppice on 5th. On 16th a few lucky visitors were able to enjoy eight waxwings feeding on rose hips at the side of the bridge and on 25th 20 were feeding on rose hips opposite the entrance to the car park. In the bitterly cold conditions there were only two warm places on and close to the reserve - the Visitor Centre and the manure heap at the edge of the farmland. The latter remained largely snow and ice-free bringing in up to three meadow pipits, grey wagtails, pied wagtails and on 20th a female stonechat to feed on the abundance of invertebrates.

Up to 25 goldfinches visited the feeders in the Sensory Garden and bullfinches seemed to be everywhere this month. Up to five were seen at the feeders in the Sensory Garden and up to 10 were

reported on the Willow Path. Their contact calls could be heard all round the reserve.

On the work front, volunteers carried out repairs to the dead hedges on the Willow Path and on 28th the middle island on the Lagoon was strimmed in readiness for the return of the oystercatchers in February. A check of the artificial otter holt on the bottom island revealed a very large female mink in residence with two freshly killed coot. No wonder the coot numbers have been falling recently!

## **February**

There was a very unsettled start to the month with strong westerly winds reaching gale force on 4th and squally showers turning to snow. There was further snow on 5th and the wind remained strong and blustery. More snow came on 10th and a heavier fall on 13th left a good two to three inches. Fortunately, a dry second half to the month gave sodden paths a chance to dry out but it was generally rather cold and cloudy.

There was plenty of activity on the wetlands. Water rails showed well on the path between the reedbeds and there were daily sightings in the first half of the month. One was also seen at the Dragonfly Ponds on 11th. Snipe too were rather easier to find with up to nine seen from the Willow Path hide in the last week of the month. Up to 12 goosanders came onto the Lagoon at dusk and there were sightings most days on the river. Goldeneye too were seen almost daily on the Lagoon and river with up to seven birds reported. Up to 14 wigeon were present (the highest ever February count) and one or two pochard were seen some days but shovelers were disappointing with a single bird on just four dates. Tufted duck numbers reached 19 but gadwall numbers started to fall away in the second half of the month with no double figure counts after 16th. There was a good count of 39 teal on the Duck Marsh late in the day on 10th. Kingfishers were again elusive but there were two sightings in the Reedbed on 2nd and 16th. The first oystercatcher returned on 16th and there were sightings on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh.

On the farmland redwings, fieldfares and starlings were seen some days in mixed flocks of up to 120 birds. Starling numbers reached 80

on 26th but redwing and fieldfare numbers were generally disappointing.

Other sightings this month included a meadow pipit on 7th, a lesser redpoll on 9th and 20th, siskins on 9th and 20th, two common buzzards over the farmland on 16th, two treecreepers on 20th, a grey wagtail on three dates, goldcrests on five dates and red kites on nine dates. Lapwings were only reported on two dates but 25 were over the Coppice on 16th. On 4th 12 waxwings were feeding on rose hips at the roadside by the car park. Barn owls were typically elusive but pellets were found in the Mike Sheldon hide this month showing that one had been roosting there.

There was a good deal of mammal activity this month with otters much in evidence with regular tracks under the bridge and around the fish pass. There was also a rare daylight sighting in the Fish Pass. Up to six roedeer were seen on the Duck Marsh.

Habitat management-wise, the remaining islands on the Lagoon were cleared of vegetation at the beginning of the month and trees were planted in the recently cleared area to the right of the path to the Reedbed Hide.

## **March**

Based on Met. Office figures, which began in 1910, March 2013 turned out to be the equal second coldest March, only beaten by 1962. With high pressure to the north of the UK, bitterly cold easterly winds and snow were the main features. There was snow on and off throughout the month but a heavy fall on the night of 21st and throughout the following day, backed by a stiff easterly wind, left drifts many feet deep in places. With a good six inches on the reserve and the entry road impassable we had to close for a whole weekend for the first time since Foot and Mouth. It turned out to be the heaviest March snowfall since 1979.

There were, however, some notable wildlife sightings for the lucky few who braved the conditions. On 16th 37 waxwings paid a brief visit to trees in the Manager's Garden and on 19th a barn owl, that had been suspected of roosting in the Mike Sheldon Hide for some

weeks, was seen for the first time by an early morning volunteer at 6.30am on the Coppice fence being harassed by two crows. In the last week of the month it was seen hunting on the Scrubland on several dates, usually late in the day.

Otters were again much in evidence with regular tracks under the bridge in both snow and wet mud and further downstream one was caught on camera on four nights. A less welcome visitor was a mink caught on the same camera on 11th.

On the wetlands pochard numbers built up to a record 18 on 24th and wigeon were present throughout the month with the highest ever March count of 15 on 10th. Up to 34 teal were seen on the Duck Marsh and tufted duck numbers reached 25 on 12th. Shelduck are only occasional visitors to the reserve so three on the Wet Grassland in snowy conditions on 18th was a nice record. Up to eight goldeneye were on the river or lagoon throughout the month and there was a report of 11 on the river on 3rd. Waders were typically thin on the ground but the solitary oystercatcher was joined by a second bird on 1st and on 9th two redshanks were on the Duck Marsh with one there on 13th. Water rails were reported on the riverbank and in the Reedbed on 2nd and at the edge of the Lagoon on 17th. Snipe showed well some days with up to 9 on the Duck Marsh and 7 on the Lagoon.

At the Dragonfly Ponds the first frog spawn was reported on 9th but on 17th the remains of a number of large frogs were found on Woodhead Pond. Various suspects were considered including weasel, fox, barn owl and grey heron. On the same date a grey heron was seen killing a large frog on the Wet Grassland. Six herons were there on 16th, probably with the same intention.

The linnet flock was seen most days on Tim's Field with up to 43 birds reported. On the farmland fieldfares and redwings were seen on a few dates and a mixed flock of 26 fieldfares and 12 redwings provided good views in a tree on the Willow Path on 18th. The starling flock on the farmland reached 300+ in snowy conditions on 22nd.

Other sightings this month included a curlew on 1st and 10th, a common buzzard on 2nd, a treecreeper in the car park on 3rd, a woodcock flushed in the Coppice on 4th, a kingfisher on the Wet Grassland on 16th, a male mandarin on the river also on 16th, a brambling in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge on 17th, four goldcrests on the river path on 20th, two meadow pipits on the same date and three on 27th, a red kite on five dates with two on two dates and a grey wagtail on two dates. Tree sparrows were disappointing with just a single bird visiting the feeders in the Manager's Garden on five dates. Many visitors enjoyed good views of roedeer with up to five reported including four bucks.

The bitterly cold easterly winds in the latter part of the month put paid to any thoughts of the first sand martins and chiffchaffs and a particularly hard frost on the night of 28th saw the Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh completely frozen over with just a small amount of open water on the Lagoon.

Volunteers battled on throughout the month digging out the foundations for a hard path from the Mike Sheldon Hide to the Willow Path Hide, often in very bad conditions.

## **April**

A few patches of snow remained at the start of the month and, whilst it was largely dry, it felt cold in a stiff easterly wind with frosts most nights. The wind finally moved out of the east and it was the turn of the westerlies which reached gale force at times between 14th and 16th but, with temperatures reaching 15°C, it brought out good numbers of small tortoiseshell butterflies and a few peacocks in the more sheltered areas. Winds again reached gale force overnight on 18th and while there were some quieter days the wind was often a problem and strong at times, swinging from south west to north east and back into the west in the last few days of the month.

Migrants were slow to appear and a chiffchaff singing in woodland on the far bank of the river on 2nd was a good two weeks later than last year. A few more migrants started to turn up with two swallows over the Scrubland on 12th, around 30 sand martins over the river on 13th, the first blackcap and house martin on 14th and willow warbler on

15th. A whinchat on the roof of the Visitor Centre on 15th was a good early record for this species. On the wetlands a common sandpiper was on the Duck Marsh on 10th and there were further reports of one or two birds on several dates thereafter. Little ringed plovers have been hard to find here over recent years so two on the Duck Marsh on 16th were nice to see and there were sightings on several more dates to the end of the month.

The first common whitethroat was seen in the Coppice on 20th and the first sedge warbler was singing in the Reedbed on 22nd with reed warbler just two days later on 24th. A grasshopper warbler was "reeling" on the Scrubland on 24th and on 28th one was "reeling" just across the road from the Lagoon Hide. Five swifts were over the reserve on 27th and a lesser whitethroat was on the Butterfly Bank on 28th.

As the summer visitors arrived a few winter visitors hung on, the last fieldfares and redwings being reported on 14th. Fifteen waxwings made a final appearance in trees in the Manager's Garden on 21st.

Toads emerged in force from 14th with the riverside path particularly busy and 200 counted at the Dragonfly Ponds on 15th. The first spawn was laid on 19th.

On the wetlands several pairs of gadwall were present throughout the month, raising hopes for further breeding this year. Ten pochard were still present on 1st but there were no sightings after 6th. Shovelers had been thin on the ground this winter but up to eight were on the Wet Grassland and Duck Marsh between 10th and 14th. A male mandarin was on the Duck Marsh on 10th and there was a further sighting on the river on 16th. Shelduck have always been infrequent visitors to the reserve but three birds were on the Duck Marsh on 16th with two there most days from 20th. A single great crested grebe was on the Lagoon between 19th and 21st and a pink-footed goose was there on 20th. The first brood of mallard ducklings (10) was seen on the river on the same date.

Snipe showed well on the Duck Marsh in the first two weeks of the month with 17 reported on 6th. There was further wader activity in the form of a single redshank there on 1st and 16th. The pair of

oystercatchers was on the Lagoon throughout the month with three birds reported on several dates. Two lapwings were on the Duck Marsh or Lagoon from 7th with five on 10th.

A red-eared terrapin was an unusual find on the Back Reedbed on 15th. Water rails were reported on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland but a bird on the riverbank provided the best views on several dates between 3rd and 10th. Interestingly, this bird was ringed on the left leg. There were regular sightings of goosanders on the river with seven reported on 2nd. It was a disappointing month for common terns with just one bird flying over the lagoon on 28th.

Other sightings this month included a peregrine falcon over the Scrubland on 7th, a little owl on 7th and 17th, two curlews on 7th and one on 19th, a grey partridge near the Fish Pass on 7th, grey wagtails on seven dates, a tree creeper near the bridge on three dates, two tree sparrows in the Manager's Garden on four dates, three siskins there on 24th, a kingfisher on three dates, common buzzard on five dates and red kite on two dates.

Sparrowhawks were very active this month. A large female killed a wood pigeon on Tim's Field on 7th and was immediately mobbed by more than 50 crows. On 20th four were displaying over the reserve with three on 28th. Linnet numbers surprisingly increased somewhat this month with at least 60 birds on Tim's Field some days and several males in full song. The barn owl, however, proved elusive with just one brief sighting on the Coppice fence at 8.30pm on 12th.

Thanks to a much drier April than last year habitat management work went ahead normally and work continued on the hard path along the Willow Path. On 14th a 20 metre length of dead hedging near the Willow Path Hide had to be rebuilt as a result of gale damage.

## **May**

Three very pleasant days from 5th to 7th with plenty of sunshine and light winds saw temperatures reach 20°C but it was short lived and much of the month was unsettled with strong winds and rain and daytime temperatures struggling to reach 10°C at times. It turned out to have been the coldest spring since 1979. High pressure finally took charge on 31st with temperatures soaring to 22°C.

The awaited common terns finally arrived on 5th with three over the Lagoon but by 12th six birds were on site with eight for a time on 14th. An immature lesser black-backed gull caused anxiety some days but by the end of the month two pairs were settled on the middle island with a third pair on the usual raft. As many as nine were present on 27th. The oystercatcher pair on the middle island produced one chick which made its first appearance on 15th.

Nesting was well under way elsewhere on the wetlands, the first coot chicks (3) appearing in the Reedbed on 19th. Further broods of young coots were seen on the Wet Grassland, Duck Marsh and Lagoon over the next few days.

With the resident mute swans on a nest at their old site on the Duck Marsh and the younger pair at the far end of the Wet Grassland hopes were high for a good number of cygnets but the Duck Marsh birds produced just three this year and the Wet Grassland birds none by the end of the month. The three cygnets made their first appearance on 22nd, the same date that the first two little grebe chicks were seen on the Wet Grassland.

A great crested grebe was again on the Lagoon from 16th to the end of the month but there was no sign of a second bird arriving. A pair of little ringed plovers was present throughout the month on the Duck Marsh, hopefully nesting somewhere. Up to two common sandpipers were seen on the Lagoon or Duck Marsh on several dates between 1st and 19th and one or two lapwings were present throughout the month.

Water rails were reported on four dates with two seen on the path between the Reedbeds on 15th and 18th. The two shelduck remained on the Duck Marsh until 6th but were not seen after this date. Two unseasonal visitors were a pink-footed goose from 27th to 29th and a female wigeon from 29th to 31st.

Garden warblers are always one of the last summer visitors to arrive and the first birds (4) were singing on 12th. It wasn't the easiest of months for studying bird song, thanks to the persistent winds, but blackcaps in particular seemed a bit thin on the ground after a very

good year in 2012. Common whitethroats, however, were all round the reserve as usual but lesser whitethroat was only reported on one date. Reed warblers were well established in the Reedbed with sedge warblers on all four wetlands.

It was a good month for grasshopper warblers with at least three "reeling" birds present. One particularly obliging bird performed in a patch of wild raspberry right by the path to the Manager's Garden from 5th to 11th, giving a number of observers chance not just to hear it but to see it too.

Two pairs of swallows took up residence in the dumper truck shed (One pair nested successfully here last year) and one or two even checked out the inside of the Visitor Centre and workshop for potential nest sites. With swifts present in decent numbers recorded swift calls were played at the nesting tower behind the Reedbed in the hope that they might take up residence.

The nest box on the side of the Visitor Centre is always popular and this year it was the turn of a pair of great tits. Nine eggs were laid and these hatched on 15th, much to the delight of the many visitors who were able to enjoy the action live on the television in the centre.

Other sightings this month included a red kite on four dates, a common buzzard on three dates, a kingfisher on four dates and a grey wagtail on two dates. A pied wagtail was feeding a juvenile in the Yorkshire Water compound on 26th and on the farmland muck heap on 29th. However, hopes of the little owls breeding again this year were dashed when the female was found dead near the workshop.

Goosanders were again much in evidence on the river with as many as seven males seen together. It was also an eventful month for grey herons. On 13th one was found dead on the Scrubland having presumably been blown onto power lines by the very strong winds at the time. On 26th one was seen at the edge of the Kingfisher Pool struggling with a 15 inch long live eel - only the second ever eel record on the reserve.

Contractors were back on site this month planting trees and wildflowers at the Fish Pass and contouring two new ponds from the Fish Pass spoil in the field to the east of the path to the Manager's Garden. Meanwhile, our own volunteers continued work on the new hard path from the Mike Sheldon Hide to the Willow Path Hide.

## **June**

It was a much better month than last June with no rain at all until 12th and plenty of warm, sunny days. Our spring wildlife event on 8th enjoyed one of these days and drew in many visitors. The last 10 days of the month were rather less settled with the return of the wind and squally showers at times with just one very wet day on 28th. Despite the warm sunshine, with the exception of banded demoiselles, the larger dragonflies were hard to find and butterfly numbers were disappointing.

What had been an excellent month for common terns turned into a disaster when a mink went on the rampage on the Lagoon on 30th. Up to 11 birds had been seen with possibly as many as four nests on the middle island and a nest with four chicks on one of the rafts. By the end of that day only two adult terns were left. The mink was probably also responsible for the disappearance of a number of coot chicks and a new family of six cygnets on the Wet Grassland that had first appeared on 7th.

The oystercatchers were rather more fortunate, the single juvenile making its first flights and all three birds were regular visitors to Tim's Field later in the month. Other waders were thin on the ground with no reports of little ringed plovers after 5th, a common sandpiper on just one date and a single lapwing on one date. Up to 15 adult gadwall were reported and on 13th the first brood of nine ducklings was seen on the Lagoon with a second family of nine on 16th. The first moorhen chicks (6) were on the Duck Marsh on 12th. The great crested grebe was on the Lagoon throughout the month but again there was no sign of a second bird arriving. A male and female shoveler were there on 9th and a single male was present from 16th to 21st on the Wet Grassland. What was probably the same bird was seen on the Lagoon on 27th. A female wigeon was again present on 3rd and 6th. Families of little grebes were seen on the Wet Grassland

and Duck Marsh. Water rails were harder to find and there was just one sighting in the Reedbed on 25th.

Away from the wetlands, eight young great tits fledged from the nestbox on the side of the Visitor Centre on 4th and two young wrens fledged from a nest in the hide at the Manager's Garden on 13th. The first sedge warblers were reported feeding young at the edge of the Reedbed and Wet Grassland on 8th. The first juvenile long-tailed tits were seen on the Butterfly Bank on 9th.

Red kites were reported on 12 dates. On 3rd two were over the farmland as it was being cut and on 14th five were over Tim's Field as it was being ploughed, the birds frequently landing to pick up invertebrates. Juvenile mistle thrushes were daily visitors to Tim's Field for the same purpose from the middle of the month with up to 10 birds reported.

Other sightings this month included a common buzzard on two dates, around 450 starlings on the freshly cut farmland on 5th, six juvenile goosanders on the river on 13th, grey wagtails on nine dates with up to three reported and a roedeer and fawn at the back of the Duck Marsh on 12th and 23rd. A dipper at the weir on 25th was the first sighting since 29th December 2010. Kingfishers were seen on six dates with two at the edge of the car park on 25th and three at the Kingfisher Pool on 29th including at least one juvenile.

Common whitethroats sang all round the reserve throughout the month with one just outside the Visitor Centre in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge. The first juveniles were seen on 16th near the Lagoon Hide.

Ragwort removal from the hay meadows and the dreaded balsam "bashing" in the Coppice were the main tasks for volunteers this month and for the first time Tim's Field was seeded using our own equipment on 20th and 26th.

## **July**

After an unsettled start to the month high pressure was firmly in charge from 5th bringing warm, sunny days and temperatures soaring

as high as 28°C. It was the only prolonged hot spell since July 2006, which itself turned out to be the hottest July on record. Grass paths on the reserve were burnt brown. The hot conditions triggered thunderstorms and heavy rain from 23rd but we managed to miss most of them. However, a night of heavy rain on 27th produced 42mm, bringing the river up sharply and sending a torrent of water through the Fish Pass. Despite being more unsettled it remained very warm and there were good sunny periods which brought out butterflies out in good numbers.

On the wetlands most ducks were in eclipse plumage from early in the month making identification difficult at times but the two gadwall families were easy to pick out with 17 of their 18 ducklings still intact despite a continued mink presence. Two unseasonal wigeon were on the Lagoon on 10th with one on 24th. Tufted ducks did their now familiar disappearing act with just one on the river on 3rd and two on the Lagoon on 12th. Teal started to reappear with two on the Wet Grassland on 1st, three on 15th and one on the Duck Marsh on 29th. Kingfisher sightings continued to increase and apart from the usual wetland sites birds were reported at the Education Pond and Dipping Pond.

Thick algae built up rapidly on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh with the hot conditions and, as in previous years little grebes were quick to exploit this new nesting environment. A nest with four eggs on the algae in front of the Willow Path Hide disappeared on 28th but another with four eggs at the back of the Lagoon was still intact at the end of the month. On 1st July two common terns hovered over a mink swimming across the Lagoon and two or three birds were seen over the next few days but there were no sightings after 13th. Mink continued to be active for much of the month.

Other sightings this month included red kites on 15 dates with up to three birds seen, grey wagtails on four dates, a common buzzard over the Lagoon on 10th, a barn owl on the Coppice fence on the same date at 11.30pm and a little owl on the Sludge Lagoon fence on 27th. Single snipe flew off the Dragonfly Ponds on 16th and 18th and one was seen on the Duck Marsh on 24th.

Two juvenile kestrels made their first appearance on the ledge of the nest box in the compound on 14th but had left the nest by the end of the month. Seventeen grey partridges were released onto the reserve on 25th and a juvenile kestrel which had been taken into care from another site was released on 29th.

Juvenile warblers were seen in good numbers with common whitethroat, willow warbler, reed warbler and sedge warbler all appearing to be having a good breeding season thanks to good weather and a wealth of insect life. Grasshopper warblers were harder to find but one was "reeling" at the edge of the Scrubland at 10.00pm during a Bat Night on 20th.

Butterflies certainly benefited from lots of sunny days with the first fresh small tortoiseshells emerging from 8th with exceptional numbers on creeping thistle later in the month. The heavy overnight rain on 27th gave the crops on Tim's Field a boost, bringing in particularly high numbers of small whites.

Removing the last of the ragwort on the two hay meadows was a priority for volunteers prior to them being cut on 26th. Himalayan balsam removal on the riverbank proved rather trickier with numerous attacks from angry wasps.

## **August**

With the jet stream much further north than in recent years this summer (June, July and August) turned out to be the driest, warmest and sunniest since 2006 - in huge contrast to last summer which was the wettest for 100 years. Plenty of warm sunny days brought out butterflies in good numbers. Unfortunately, the Summer Fair on Saturday 17th suffered one of the few less pleasant days and a freshening wind from lunchtime curtailed activities around 2.00pm with gazebos and the bouncy castle threatening to take off.

With the breeding season winding down small birds were often hard to see but the contact calls of chiffchaffs and willow warblers could be heard all round the reserve. Hirundines were rather more visible and present in good numbers with a lot of juvenile birds on the wing. Around 25 house martins were over the Wet Grassland on 11th and

swallows could be seen in similar numbers on the overhead wires by the Visitor Centre. Scores of swallows, with lesser numbers of house martins and sand martins, were over the Coppice during the evening of the second Bat Night on 10th and subsequent evening counts produced between 200 and 300 birds. Four pairs of swallows nested successfully in the dumper truck shed. Swift numbers started to tail off in the second week of the month and a single bird over the Willow Path on 13th was the last of the year.

Activity at the feeders in the Sensory Garden and Manager's Garden increased considerably this month with both goldfinches and greenfinches in reasonable numbers. Twenty goldfinches were on overhead wires by the Manager's Garden on 28th. Both adult and juvenile great spotted woodpeckers were regular visitors to the Manager's Garden, though one fell prey to a sparrowhawk in the Coppice.

On the wetlands tufted ducks remained elusive with sightings on just three dates and no more than two birds. A few teal started to arrive towards the end of the month with 13 on 27th the best count. Little grebes were very much in evidence with numerous chicks and juveniles on the Lagoon and a further three hatching at a nest near the water inlet on 9th. Kingfishers were reported on seven dates - four of these on the Lagoon, two on the river and one on the Dipping Ponds. There was a considerable increase in cormorant activity from 18th with up to 10 birds seen together including at least six juveniles. Mink unfortunately remained active throughout.

The fast running water on the Fish Pass is going to provide excellent habitat for grey wagtails and dippers. Dippers were seen here on three dates between 21st and 30th with two on one date. Grey wagtails were seen on the Fish Pass on three dates and one was also seen on the roof of the Visitor Centre.

Large mixed feeding parties of tits and warblers were seen on a few dates and one on the riverbank on 20th and 21st included up to 15 long-tailed tits and several willow warblers.

Other sightings this month included a little owl in the compound on 1st and 15th and one by the Sludge Lagoon fence on 14th, a

common sandpiper on the Lagoon on 3rd, red kites on four dates, a common buzzard on two dates, two grey partridge on three dates and a water rail and juvenile on the Duck Marsh on 21st. A male linnet on the compound fence on 11th was the first sighting for nearly three months and four on overhead wires near the radio mast on 18th almost certainly included juveniles. A snipe was seen on one of the new seasonal ponds by the Manager's Garden on 14th and two flew over the Dragonfly Ponds on 25th.

## **September**

There was a windy and much less settled start to the month and temperatures nose-dived from 15th with 11°C well below seasonal norm and feeling particularly unpleasant in a very strong wind with rain at times. High pressure established itself again from 21st and with just a light breeze and temperatures reaching 22°C it felt very pleasant despite a lot of cloud at times. The high pressure remained in charge until the end of the month, 26th and 27th bringing two beautiful warm, sunny days. Up to five species of dragonflies were active including a pair of black darters - a first record for the reserve.

Gadwall numbers started to build on the wetlands reaching 70 by the end of the month. A few teal were seen on all the main wetland areas with a best count of 39 on the Duck Marsh on 29th. Tufted ducks continued to be elusive with six the highest number on 24th. A female shoveler was on the Lagoon on two dates. A few wigeon were seen daily with a best count of 11. A black swan aggressively pursued the resident mute swans when it arrived on the Lagoon on 14th but it calmed down after a day or so and was present until the end of the month. The three juvenile mute swans made their maiden flights on 25th without mishap. Two juvenile water rails were reported on the Duck Marsh on 14th, two adults were seen on the Reedbed on 21st and an adult was seen on one of the islands on the Lagoon on 25th.

Kingfishers were seen on eight dates with two birds some days. Snipe were easier to see in the second half of the month with up to three on the Duck Marsh. One was also accidentally flushed at the Dragonfly Ponds on 27th.

Other sightings this month included a little owl in the compound on 1st and 2nd, a common buzzard on 13th and 22nd, two whinchats on the farmland on 14th, a great crested grebe on the river on 25th, grey partridges on three dates with three on one occasion and grey wagtails on 11 dates. The Fish Pass continued to be productive with dippers seen on eight dates. Fresh otter prints on wet sand on the river side of the pass on 8th were the first for four months. Elsewhere goldfinch numbers at the feeders in the Sensory Garden reached 31 on 15th. Swallow numbers remained high with good numbers of juveniles. A count of 76 birds on overhead wires near the Manager's Garden on 25th was the last sighting of the year.

Warblers became increasingly hard to find as birds vacated the reserve. A common whitethroat in the Manager's Garden on 11th was the last of the year. Willow warblers were reported on just a handful of dates with one in the Coppice on 22nd the last confirmed sighting of the year. Chiffchaffs were also reported on a few dates with one singing in the elder across the road from the Visitor Centre on 24th. September can be an interesting month for passage migrants but there was little visible movement this year.

Autumn colours started to appear in some of the trees and hedgerows towards the end of the month and spindle and alder buckthorn on the Butterfly Bank were heavy with fruit. A bumper crop of elderberries in the Coppice brought in good numbers of woodpigeons to feed on the bounty. Jays were particularly active this month on their acorn forays back and forth.

Water levels on the Duck Marsh, Reedbed and Wet Grassland were dropped this month for autumn maintenance work and the central strip on the Duck Marsh was cut on 20th. Tern rafts were brought ashore for alterations to make it harder for mink to gain access. Volunteers also worked on clearing excess vegetation at the Dragonfly Ponds.

## **October**

It was a wet and often windy month but very mild. It was in fact the wettest month of the year to date. Fortunately, the Fungus Foray on

20th and the Autumn Wildlife, Pie and Peas event on 26th enjoyed two of the few dry and less windy days.

The first winter thrushes started to arrive with 54 redwings on 13th and four fieldfares on 16th. Four redwings were also seen in the car park on 26th. With water levels on the wetlands kept low throughout the month hopes were high that a few waders might take advantage of the ample areas of wet mud but there was limited activity. A common sandpiper was seen on the Lagoon on 4th and snipe were rather easier to see with up to four birds reported on the Duck Marsh. However, the only other wader was a jack snipe which was seen and filmed on the Wet Grassland on 19th. There was a further report of one at the edge of the Reedbed on 20th.

October last year produced record numbers of gadwall with a best count of 109. With numbers building nicely at the end of September some big counts were anticipated in October but it was not to be, 49 being the highest number reported. A few wigeon were on the Lagoon daily with a best count of 11. A male and female shoveler were there from 19th to the end of the month. Teal were seen most days with a best count of 21 but tufted ducks were again thin on the ground. The black swan remained on the reserve throughout the month. Grey heron numbers on the Duck Marsh built up in the second half of the month with as many as 10 birds some days. Water rails were seen in the Reedbed on four dates with two on 26th. An adult and juvenile were reported on the Duck Marsh on 2nd. It was a disappointing month for kingfishers with sightings on just two dates. Perhaps they were fishing on the canal with river levels being high for much of the month?

Other sightings this month included a little owl in the compound on 13th, a grey partridge on the same date and two on 29th, a goldcrest on 20th and 26th and grey wagtails on four dates with three at the Fish Pass on 22nd. There was little other activity at the Fish Pass this month with water levels high. One or two reed buntings returned to the feeders in the Manager's Garden from the middle of the month and up to 12 greenfinches were reported. A small flock of linnets was on Tim's Field most days with between 35 and 40 on occasions. There was again a lot of jay activity throughout the month.

There was a good deal of work done on the hedgerows this month. The John Ackroyd Meadow hedge received its regular autumn trim and a section of the Mike Fisk Meadow hedge from the Sensory Garden down to Tim's Field was cut back. A section of the Reedbed was also cut, allowing views on to the back water body.

## **November**

There were a few very windy days but it was generally a calm month with some beautiful sunny days. It was, in fact, the sunniest November since 2006. The first frost of the autumn came on the night of 3rd with a hard white frost on 9th which made for a very chilly start for the monthly WeBS count the next day. A hard frost on the night of 22nd saw all water bodies frozen over for a time on 23rd.

Numbers of water birds on the wetlands were disappointing with even the reliable gadwall only reaching 34. With the back Duck Marsh dry for most of the month the majority of teal were to be found on the Lagoon but the best count was just 25. Wigeon numbers reached 15 on the front Duck Marsh on 28th but this was the only double figure count of the month. The first two pochard of the autumn arrived on 23rd and one or two birds were then seen daily to the end of the month. A male shoveler was on the Lagoon throughout with two females on the Duck Marsh on one date. Tufted duck numbers remained low with no more than five seen. Coot numbers were the lowest since 2001 with just one bird seen in the second half of the month. Goosanders usually start to come onto the Lagoon in the latter part of November but there was little activity most days with a best count of nine on 23rd. The black swan was present until 6th and again on 17th but spent the rest of the month on the canal. Water levels had to be kept low throughout the month with work starting on a new sand martin nesting bank on the Lagoon on 4th.

However, one waterside bird didn't disappoint. In fact the reduced water levels almost certainly helped. Water rails were seen almost daily in the first three weeks of the month, often venturing onto the muddy margins of the Lagoon. A juvenile was reported on two dates. The Reedbed was less productive than usual but two birds were seen here on 7th. Snipe were seen on all four water bodies but the best count was four flying over Tim's Field. A jack snipe was reported on

the Wet Grassland on 6th. The best place to have a chance of seeing kingfishers proved to be the Lagoon with birds seen here on four dates and on the river on two dates.

Other sightings this month included a common buzzard on 3rd and 13th, red kites on three dates with three on 13th, two meadow pipits on the farmland on 6th, a great crested grebe on the river on 16th, two woodcock on 24th and grey wagtails on seven dates. Two overwintering warblers were seen - a chiffchaff near the lagoon on 12th and a male blackcap in the Manager's Garden on 24th. Seven lapwings on the Lagoon on 13th were the first for almost five months. A willow tit on the Willow Path on 13th was the first record since 17th March 2012 but the bird could not be found subsequently. The linnet flock was seen daily, alternating between Tim's Field, the poplars and trees in the Manager's Garden and with a best count of 56.

Activity at the feeders in the Manager's Garden picked up somewhat and tree sparrows were daily visitors from 6th with three seen most days. A female house sparrow there on 10th was somewhat of a rarity for Rodley. Coal tits are also infrequent visitors to the reserve but one visited the feeders on three dates with two birds on one occasion. Up to six reed buntings were reported.

Fieldfares were seen on the farmland most days with usually no more than 30 but 72 flew over on 11th and around 90 flew over on 12th. Redwings were much less numerous with sightings on just four dates and a best count of only five.

In addition to the work on the new sand martin nesting bank volunteers were kept busy reducing the hedgerow between the John Ackroyd Meadow and the Scrubland.

## **December**

After a calm start to the month gale force south westerly winds reached 87mph in parts of Yorkshire on 5th causing some damage to the Wet Grassland Hide and resulting in its closure for a time. It was short-lived but the first in a whole series of weather fronts from the south west in the second half of the month brought more gale force winds and rain. There were one or two frosty nights in between but it

was largely quite a mild month. According to the Met Office it was the stormiest December in the UK since data was compiled in 1969 and the windiest month since 1993.

Although water levels on most of the wetlands were restored to normal levels this month waterfowl numbers in the main stayed low, probably due to the lack of a good cold snap which tends to result in an influx at this time of year. Gadwall numbers were the lowest for December since 2009 and the usually reliable gathering of goosanders on the Lagoon towards dusk failed to materialise, though eight were seen on the river on one date. There were no goldeneye sightings at all in the last three months of the year for the first time since 2007 and the highest tufted duck count of seven was the lowest for December in the reserve's history. There was no improvement in coot numbers either with a best count of just three being the lowest for December since 2001.

On the plus side there were several double figure counts of wigeon on the farmland and a December record of 21 on one date. Teal numbers improved somewhat with one exceptional count of 60 on 7th the highest December number since 2007. Two male pochard were on the Lagoon throughout the month but numbers increased to 12 briefly on 22nd with six males and six females. Shovelers too were present daily though with no more than three reported. Water rails were rather harder to find this month with single birds on just three dates on the Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh. With the river high and coloured throughout the month kingfishers were particularly active on the Lagoon with numerous sightings. The black swan returned on 7th and was present to the end of the month. There were some good gatherings of grey herons on the Duck Marsh in the early part of the month with up to 10 reported.

Other sightings this month included two treecreepers in the car park on 3rd and one in riverside trees by the bridge on 30th, two grey partridge behind the Manager's Garden on 7th, 50 lapwings over the wetlands on 19th and seven on 21st, a tawny owl on the entry road on 18th, a woodcock on 19th, grey wagtail on three dates, chiffchaff on three dates with two on one date and red kite on five dates. Bullfinches were particularly numerous this month with six seen at a feeder station on the Willow Path on 17th and six in the Manager's

Garden on 22nd. Four males were reported at the edge of the Sludge Lagoon on 15th and in the Sensory Garden on 28th.

Very mild conditions had song thrushes singing some days; fieldfares were seen on the farmland and in the poplars on several dates but redwings were again much more elusive with sightings on just two dates, 37 over the Mike Fisk Meadow on 16th being the highest count. Tree sparrows continued to visit the feeders in the Manager's Garden throughout the month but with still no more than three seen and often just one or two. The linnet flock was present throughout with up to 50 reported in trees in the Manager's Garden.

Work continued on the sand martin nesting bank with shuttering erected in readiness for the delivery of the concrete in the new year. Volunteers also continued reducing the hedgerow between the John Ackroyd Meadow and the Scrubland and repair work was carried out to the Wet Grassland Hide.

## Introduction to the Systematic List of Birds

The bird's name is followed by the Latin name and a description of its status on the reserve. In order to do this, each bird has been placed in one of the following categories:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Resident         | A species which is found on the reserve throughout the year but has not yet been proved to have bred on the reserve.   |
| Resident Breeder | All or part of the local population is present throughout the year and breeds on the reserve.  |
| Migrant Breeder  | Breeds on the reserve but all or most of the breeding population departs in autumn or winter.  |
| Casual Breeder   | Has bred irregularly on the reserve and is likely to do so again.  |
| Winter Visitor   | All or part of the population breeds away from the reserve but either spends the winter here or has visited the reserve on at least 25 occasions in the winter months. |
| Migrant Visitor  | A species which is found on the reserve in spring and/or summer but has not yet been proved to have bred on the reserve. Most or all depart in autumn and/or winter.   |
| Passage Visitor  | Has occurred on 25 or more occasions as a passage migrant in spring and/or winter.   |
| Frequent Visitor | A species which visits the reserve throughout the year or a good part of the year but does not breed on the reserve.   |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Infrequent Visitor | Has occurred on more than 10 but fewer than 25 occasions as either a passage or a winter visitor.   |
| Scarce Visitor     | Has occurred on the reserve on only 10 occasions or less  |
| Escaped Species    | Used where there is a possibility that some (but not necessarily all) records of a species refer to birds that have escaped from captivity. |

The observer's initials appear in brackets after some records.

#### Abbreviations used in the Report:

|       |                               |
|-------|-------------------------------|
| BTO   | British Trust for Ornithology |
| c     | approximately                 |
| et al | and others                    |
| RNR   | Rodley Nature Reserve         |
| WeBS  | BTO Wetland Bird Survey       |
| YNU   | Yorkshire Naturalists Union   |

## **Systematic List of Birds Recorded**

### **Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor* **Resident Breeder**

The remaining seven juveniles from last year were present throughout January with up to eight adults also on site. The juveniles started to disperse in March but three were still on the Lagoon up to 21st April. The resident Duck Marsh pair of adults were seen at their nest at the usual site from 23rd April and the Wet Grassland pair were observed at a nest from 12th May. Three cygnets made their first appearance on the Duck Marsh on 22nd May (DC/EC) - a surprisingly small family this year as this pair normally produces between six and eight cygnets. On 7th June six cygnets, presumably from the nest on the Wet Grassland, were seen on the Kingfisher Pool (DAN/JK). No more than five were seen subsequently and these were last seen on the Kingfisher Pool during an early morning WeBS count on 23rd June. The adults continued to be seen on the Wet Grassland and it is assumed the cygnets were predated. Last year this pair also managed to lose all six cygnets. The three juveniles from the Duck Marsh fared rather better, the birds taking their first flights on 25th September (DC/EC). Towards the end of November they started to become more independent and in December disappeared for days on end. Two juveniles were last seen on 21st December. Five adults were on the Lagoon for a time on 13th and 14th December.

### **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* **Scarce Visitor**

This species had been recorded in each of the last six years, March being the best month with birds returning to breeding grounds in Iceland dropping in for a rest. In 2012 seven birds arrived on the Lagoon on 23rd March and were present until 25th March when they were joined by two further birds. All nine birds departed later than same day. Disappointingly, there were no sightings this year.

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

This species was recorded on seven dates this year. There was a large movement of birds flying in a westerly direction between 2nd and 7th January. On 2nd 150 flew over the reserve (JC et al); around 80 flew over on 6th (JB/PM) and 108 flew over on 7th (PM et al). In between a single bird flew over the reserve on 5th (PA/CF). Single birds were also on the Lagoon on 20th April (DC/EC), on the Duck

Marsh on 27th May (PC) and on the Duck Marsh again on 29th May (PA et al). There were no reports of birds moving through in the latter part of the year.

**Greylag Goose *Anser anser* Casual Breeder**

There were no records at all in January 2011 and January 2012 but this January produced daily sightings, usually on the farmland, with up to 28 birds seen. Counts in February, March, April and May were the highest since 2010. A few birds started to spend time on the Lagoon from the end of February and on 29th March one was noted sitting on a nest on the middle island in very cold conditions with most of the Lagoon frozen over at the time. By 7th April two birds were on nests on the island. Up to 10 were on the Lagoon in April and May saw a best count there of 16 on 12th (DC/EC). One small gosling was seen on 17th May (PM/BM). There were no sightings after 26th May until 16th July when two flew over the river. Two also flew over the Lagoon on 27th July. Subsequent sightings were few and far between with six flying over the river path on 7th August and seven over Tim's Field on 22nd September the only sightings in those months. Up to two birds were seen on four dates in November, on three occasions just flyovers, but they were daily visitors to the farmland for much of December with up to 18 reported. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J  | F  | M  | A  | M  | J | J | A | S | O | N | D  |
|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 28 | 27 | 17 | 17 | 28 | - | 2 | 6 | 7 | - | 2 | 18 |

**Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* Resident Breeder**

The majority of sightings in the early part of the year were on the farmland with 77 there on 15th January (JB), 110 on 23rd January (DC/EC) and 82 on 26th January (PM) the highest counts. There were few sightings on the wetlands in January but 71 were on the Lagoon on 27th (DC/EC). A few birds started to come onto the wetlands from the beginning of February but the highest counts were still on the farmland with 73 on 10th February (WeBS) and 71 on 24th and 25th March (PM/BM). The first nest was seen on the bottom island on the Lagoon on 29th March with most of the area frozen over at the time. By 15th April birds were sitting on eggs on all three islands. On 5th May two nests were found on the bottom island, one

of these with 10 eggs. Counts of 53 in May and 40 in June were the highest ever for those months but numbers most days were considerably lower. In July birds vacated the reserve. There were sightings on the river on just three days with up to eight reported and a single bird was on the Lagoon one day. Birds were again conspicuous by their absence in August. Thirty-nine were on the river late in the day on 2nd but most other sightings were of groups flying over. Up to four were on the Lagoon on just three dates in September and 47 flew over the farmland on 22nd September but there were no other sightings. For the first time ever there were no sightings in October. There were a few in November with 38 on the Lagoon on 23rd the highest (DC/EC). In December there were sightings most days on the farmland with up to 39 counted. Birds did come onto the Lagoon but usually not until dusk. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

| J   | F  | M  | A  | M  | J  | J | A  | S  | O | N  | D  |
|-----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|---|----|----|
| 110 | 79 | 76 | 40 | 53 | 40 | 8 | 39 | 47 | - | 38 | 39 |

**Barnacle Goose *Branta leucosis* Winter Visitor / Escaped Sp.**

There were no records this year. A single bird seen on the farmland during an early morning WeBS count on 18th April 2010 was the first record since 26th April 2003 and only the second record for the reserve.

**Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* Passage Visitor**

Each year produces just one or two sightings and this year looked like being a typical one with three birds seen on the Wet Grassland on 18th March (PM/BM). There were no further sightings until 14th April when two flew over Tim's Field and the Scrubland (MW) but from 16th April birds were seen daily on the Duck Marsh until 6th May. Three arrived on 16th April in strong to gale force winds (SHe/JK et al) but only two were seen thereafter. Two birds were last seen on the middle island on the Lagoon at 8.00pm on 6th May (PM/BM et al).

**Mandarin *Aix galericulata* Scarce Visitor/Possible Escape**

Prior to this year this species had only been recorded on the reserve on three occasions - on the river on 4th and 19th April 2009 and on

the Duck Marsh on 26th March 2012 - in each case a single male. This year there were sightings of a male on three dates - on the river on 16th March (DC/EC et al), on the Duck Marsh on 10th April (DC/EC) and on the river again on 16th April (JB/MB).

**Wigeon *Anas penelope* Winter Visitor**

Wigeon records tumbled this year. Birds were present on the reserve daily from the beginning of the year until 13th April. Numbers in January were largely in single figures until 27th when 24 were counted on the grass between the Lagoon and Duck Marsh (JB/MB). This was the highest ever January count, beating last year's January best of 23. February counts were usually around nine or 10 birds with 14 on 27th the highest ever February count. A total of 15 on the Lagoon during an early morning WeBS visit on 10th March was the highest of the month and again the highest number ever recorded in March. Four birds on the Duck Marsh on 13th April appeared to be the last of the spring until a female turned up on the Lagoon on 31st May (PM/BM). The bird was last seen on 6th June. These were the first ever June records on the reserve. Two females were present for a day on 10th July (PM/BM) and a single female was seen again on 24th July (MW). There were no further sightings until 7th September when seven birds arrived on the Lagoon (PC), nine days earlier than last year's first autumn record. There were daily sightings thereafter with up to 11 in September (the highest ever in September) and 11 in October. There were no double figure counts in November until 28th when 15 were on the Duck Marsh (PM/BM). In December up to 16 could be seen grazing on the farmland some days but 20 were on the Duck Marsh on 8th (DC/EC) and a count of 21 on 15th was the highest ever for December (WeBS). Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J  | F  | M  | A | M | J | J | A | S  | O  | N  | D  |
|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| 24 | 14 | 15 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | - | 11 | 11 | 15 | 21 |

**Gadwall *Anas strepera* Resident Breeder**

Last year produced record numbers of birds with a count of 109 in October the highest ever. Numbers were never going to reach that level this year and counts in the latter part of the year were rather disappointing. This may have been partly due to the need to keep

water levels on the Lagoon lower than usual to allow work on the new sand martin nesting bank to proceed but the lack of a cold snap in December also probably kept numbers low. A pair mating on the Duck Marsh on 27th February was encouraging and with several pairs still in residence in April and May nesting for the third year running looked likely. The first brood of nine ducklings appeared on the Lagoon on 13th June ((JB/MB et al) and on 16th June two families of nine ducklings were seen there (PM/BM). Despite a continuing mink onslaught at least 16 of the 18 survived to fly. With 70 birds on the Lagoon on 29th September (JB) it seemed that October might again produce record numbers but it was not to be and the highest count for that month was just 49. There was no improvement in November or December with counts for those months the lowest since 2009. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J  | F  | M  | A  | M  | J  | J  | A  | S  | O  | N  | D  |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 44 | 38 | 11 | 20 | 12 | 18 | 12 | 12 | 70 | 49 | 34 | 22 |

**Pintail *Anas acuta* Scarce Visitor**

This was a new bird for the reserve in 2011, a male being seen on the Lagoon on 12th February. In 2012 there were sightings on two dates with a male on the Lagoon on 11th February and a female on the Duck Marsh on 26th September. There were no sightings reported this year.

**Teal *Anas crecca* Winter/Passage Visitor**

After a good year in 2011 numbers were disappointing in 2012 with just one count of more than 30 birds. There was some improvement this year with some decent counts in both the early and latter parts of the year. There was a report of 42 on 27th January, 36 of these on the Lagoon (DC/EC). However, this was by far and away the highest, the next best being just 12. It was also the highest ever January count. February produced a count of 39 on the Duck Marsh late in the day on 10th (PM/BM) but again the next best was just 20. A total of 34 were on the Duck Marsh on 14th March (PM/BM) and the same water body produced between 21 and 30 on four other dates in the month. Typically, numbers tailed off in April but a total of 25 seen during an early morning WeBS visit on 14th was the highest ever for April. There were no sightings in May, just one report of a single male

on 1st June and sightings on three dates in July - the highest being three females on 15th. A few birds started to return in the last week of August and there was an excellent September count of 39 on the Duck Marsh on 29th (JB). Numbers dropped back again in October with 21 on 13th the highest. Interestingly, a few birds started to use one of the new ponds near the Manager's Garden from October - up to seven being accidentally flushed here. With water levels kept low for habitat management work numbers were relatively low in November but there was a considerable improvement in December with one excellent count of 60 on 7th, 56 of these on the Duck Marsh (DC/EC). This was the best December count since 2007. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J  | F  | M  | A  | M | J | J | A  | S  | O  | N  | D  |
|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| 42 | 39 | 34 | 25 | - | 1 | 3 | 13 | 39 | 21 | 25 | 60 |

**Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* Resident Breeder**

Like last year, numbers on the wetlands were low for most of the year. It seems that this species prefers the free handouts on the nearby canal. While the maximum January count on the reserve was just 20, up to 35 were seen on the canal just by the reserve gates. The first ducklings were seen on 20th April, just three days later than last year - 10 on the river by the river path (JB/MB). A female with four ducklings was seen on the river near the bridge on 28th April. A female and four ducklings were on the Duck Marsh on 21st May (JK) and on 31st May a female was seen with five ducklings on the Fish Pass (JB/MB). A further family of eight tiny ducklings was on the river on 5th June (BM). Reports of a family of nine on the Lagoon in June may well have been gadwalls. The highest count of adults typically came in July with 99 on 21st during an early morning WeBS visit. but numbers of birds on the wetlands in August and September were only half those that were present in 2012 . Numbers in the latter part of the year were very similar to last year with few double figure counts, even at dusk when birds do tend to come onto the reserve. Monthly maxima, adults only, are shown below.

| J  | F  | M  | A  | M  | J   | J  | A  | S  | O  | N  | D  |
|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 20 | 33 | 25 | 20 | 30 | c40 | 99 | 39 | 40 | 28 | 25 | 16 |

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no reported sightings this year.

**Shoveler** *Anas clypeata* **Winter/Passage Visitor**

Numbers generally were very disappointing this year. For the first time since 2005 there were no records in January and only a single male was reported in February and March. A pair was on the Wet Grassland from 3rd April and by 10th April the number had risen to four males and three females with a further male on the Duck Marsh. However, the birds were only present for a few days and there were no sightings after 14th April. A single male was on the Lagoon or Wet Grassland on several dates from 9th to 27th June but there were then no sightings until 18th September when a female arrived on the Lagoon, staying for five days. A male and female were on the Lagoon on 19th and 20th October and a single male was present daily thereafter until the end of November. Two females were on the Duck Marsh briefly on 10th November. Two males and a female were on the Lagoon on 4th December (DC/EC) with just a single male and female throughout the rest of the month. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| - | 1 | 1 | 8 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 |

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina* **Winter/Passage Visitor**

Between one and three birds were on the Lagoon most days from the beginning of January to 13th February. There were no further records until 2nd March when a single bird was present. Numbers then started to build slowly and there were daily sightings throughout what was a bitterly cold March. On 21st numbers jumped sharply with 17 on the Lagoon (12♂+5♀) equaling the previous record and amazingly the most numerous duck on the Lagoon that day (PM/BM). On 24th March the record was broken with 18 counted on the Lagoon (12♂+6♀) in thick snow (PM/BM). Eighteen were again present the next day (JK). There were further double figure counts of 15 on 27th and 11 on 29th March with only a very small amount of the Lagoon ice-free. Ten were reported on 1st April, eight of these on the Duck Marsh. Two birds on 6th April were the last of the spring. The first two

birds of the autumn, a male and a female, arrived on the Lagoon on 23rd November. There were daily sightings thereafter with usually just two males seen but on 6th December six males were present (DC/EC et al) and at dusk the same day they were joined by six females (JB/PM). Most of these birds soon moved on but three or four males were still present to the end of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J | F | M  | A  | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D  |
|---|---|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 3 | 2 | 18 | 10 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | 12 |

**Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* Resident Breeder**

Counts in the early part of the year were extremely low with as few as two or three birds on the Lagoon some days. Numbers rose considerably for a time from the middle of January with 28 birds at dusk on 16th with two thirds of the Lagoon frozen over at the time. Dusk on 20th produced 50 birds with much of the Lagoon now ice-free but with half that number most days. The highest February count of 19 was the lowest for that month since 2005. Up to 25 were reported in March but numbers typically started to fall away in April. With up to 14 birds present in June (rather more than last year) hopes were high that a pair might breed successfully for the first time since 2009 but intense mink activity put paid to any nesting on the islands on the Lagoon and by the beginning of July birds had vacated the reserve. A male was on the river on 3rd July and two birds were on the Lagoon on 12th July but there were no other records until 7th August when two females were seen on the Lagoon. However, birds were only seen on three dates in August. There were a few more records in September with up to six birds reported. Numbers in October were very similar to last year. In November last year a single bird was seen on just one date. It was a little bit better this time with up to five on the Lagoon. However, December was very disappointing. A cold snap usually brings in birds in some numbers but with mild wet conditions and south westerly winds there was no sign of any influx of ducks and a best count of just seven was the lowest December maximum since the reserve opened. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J  | F  | M  | A  | M  | J  | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 50 | 19 | 25 | 15 | 12 | 14 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 |

**Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* Winter Visitor**

February and March last year produced some excellent counts with a record 14 on 11th February. The early part of this year also saw some good counts. Up to three birds were on the Lagoon throughout January but numbers increased in February with five on the Lagoon on 10th and seven on the river on 28th. Birds were also present throughout March with up to five on the Lagoon and six or seven on the river on several dates but with 11 there on 3rd (MW). On 30th March eight were on the river near the Fish Pass (JK). Up to four males were present. Most birds had left by the beginning of April. A single male was on the river on 2nd and 7th April and one was seen there again on 24th April, this the last of the spring. For the first time since 2007 there were no sightings in the last three months of the year. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J | F | M  | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 7 | 11 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

**Goosander *Mergus merganser* Frequent Visitor**

From late November to February birds come on to the Lagoon at dusk to socialise before flying off after dark. A count of 25 there at dusk on 27th January (JB/MB) proved to be the highest of the year but numbers generally were disappointing. A total of 21 were seen on 13th January (PM/BM) but there were no other counts of more than 13. One or two birds were seen on the river most days with seven on 2nd April (PM/BM), seven males on 14th May (JB/MB) and six on 15th May (DC/EC). Six "redheads" on the river below the weir on 13th June almost certainly included juveniles (JK). A juvenile was also seen on the river by the bridge on 18th July (PM/BM). A few birds started to come onto the Lagoon towards dusk in the latter part of November with a best count of nine on 23rd (PC). However, most unusually, subsequent dusk watches often failed to produce a single bird and no more than three at best came onto the Lagoon in the whole of December. Birds were around and eight were seen on the river on 15th December (DC/EC) with up to three there on several

dates. The maximum daily count for each month is shown below (adults only).

|    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J  | F  | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
| 25 | 12 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 1 | - | - | 1 | 9 | 8 |

**Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis* **Casual Breeder**

Not unexpectedly, there were again no sightings this year. The countrywide DEFRA cull has been very successful. This species bred on the reserve in 2004, 2005 and 2006 and was last seen here on 16th May 2009.

**Red-legged Partridge** *Alectoris rufa* **Scarce Visitor**

A single bird at the edge of the Willow Coppice on 24th April 2012 was the first sighting since 1st April 2010. There were no sightings this year.

**Grey Partridge** *Perdix perdix* **Casual Breeder**

A number of birds released on the reserve in July 2010 appeared to settle in well and there were regular sightings for a time. However, sightings fell away in 2011 and there were none in the second half of the year. In 2012 there was just one report of a single bird behind the Reedbed on 2nd May. This year one was accidentally flushed between the Reedbed and the Fish Pass on 7th April (PM/BM). On 25th July 17 birds were released on the reserve and again appeared to settle in well with sightings subsequently on the John Ackroyd Meadow, the farmland, Tim's Field, in the Manager's Garden and near the Fish Pass with up to three birds seen. A further bird, released in September, was seen on 24th September on the grass behind the Visitor Centre (JB/MB). Two were seen on the path to the Manager's Garden on 29th October (JB/MB) and two were reported on the farmland behind the Manager's Garden on 7th December (JB).

**Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus* **Resident Breeder**

This is a very common bird on the reserve with daily sightings throughout the year. Birds were regular visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Sensory Garden. Good numbers were to be found on Tim's Field, visiting for the abundant seed crop and the supplementary seed feeding in the winter months. Thirteen were

seen on the field on 10th February but up to 42 were seen here in February last year. Foxes undoubtedly take a number of birds but one was observed within a few feet of a male pheasant on the Scrubland on 2nd April, each seemingly oblivious of the other. Up to five were seen under the feeders in the Sensory Garden. Birds regularly roosted in trees in the Coppice but a few also nested here. A nest with seven eggs was found on 20th May (JK/BMi). A nest with seven eggs was also found between the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge and the Sludge Lagoon on 17th June (JB) but the eggs had gone by the next day. A female and one chick were seen on the Mike Fisk Meadow on 25th June (PM/BM). Two juveniles were seen on the Willow Path on 6th July (DC/EC). A female and three juveniles were on the farmland on 1st August (PM/BM) and a female with three juveniles were also seen on the Mike Fisk Meadow on 31st August (DC/EC). Among some of the higher counts in the latter part of the year, seven were recorded on the John Ackroyd Meadow during an early morning visit on 10th November (DAN et al); nine were accidentally flushed on the Butterfly Bank on 12th November (PM/BM) and seven males and two females were on Tim's Field on 18th December (DC/EC).

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* **Resident Breeder**

Like last year, numbers on the wetlands in the early part of the year were low with just single birds seen but up to three were reported on the river. There was more activity from the beginning of March with the Duck Marsh providing most sightings. It was another reasonably successful breeding season despite some intense mink activity on the wetlands. As last year, the first chicks (2) appeared on the Wet Grassland but a month earlier on 22nd May (JC). On 13th June four large juveniles, that had previously avoided detection, and one smaller juvenile were seen on the Duck Marsh (PM/BM). One tiny chick was on the Lagoon on 29th June (JB/MB). Nesting again occurred on banks of thick algae on the Lagoon from 7th July with a further nest built on a bank of algae on the Duck Marsh on 15th July but this nest with four eggs had disappeared by 28th July. In August most activity was centred on the Lagoon. On 7th two broods of chicks - four and two - were reported there (JB/MB) and on 9th three chicks hatched at a nest built on algae near the water inlet (PM/BM). Typically, numbers on the wetlands dropped from the beginning of November with no more than two birds seen daily though there were

a number of sightings on the river. Monthly maxima are shown below (adults only).

| J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 2 |

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* **Casual Breeder**

After a disappointing year in 2011 there was a big improvement in 2012 in terms of sightings and it is likely that successful breeding would have occurred but for mink predation. This year a single bird was on the Lagoon from 12th to 20th January and from 2nd to 27th March. There were no further sightings until 19th April when a bird stayed on the Lagoon for three days. One was there again from 16th May until 2nd July but there was no sign of a second bird arriving. On 14th July there was a report of a juvenile on the Wet Grassland (PS) and on 28th September there was a second hand report of two juveniles on the Reedbed but where they might have bred remains a mystery. Single adults were seen on the river on 25th September and 16th November (DC/EC) but there were no other sightings.

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* **Frequent Visitor**

There were daily sightings in 11 months of the year but, surprisingly, only on one date in July. Birds were regular visitors to the Lagoon, either fishing or loafing on the middle island. The pylon by the Fish Pass was again popular with birds resting here throughout much of the year. Among the higher counts, seven flew over Tim's Field on 13th January (WeBS); seven over the Wet Grassland on 25th August included six juveniles (WeBS) and 10 over the Duck Marsh on 28th August almost certainly included numerous juveniles (PA). Eight were counted on the pylon on 14th September (PA); nine flew over the Lagoon on 22nd September (WeBS) and six flew over the Wet Grassland on 27th October (DC/EC). The highest counts each month are shown below.

| J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A  | S | O | N | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 4 |

**Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) Scarce Visitor**

2011 was the best year to date for this species with sightings on five dates and three birds on one occasion - all between 7th July and 3rd August. Hopes were high for a repeat in 2012 when one was seen flying low over the Scrubland on 23rd July. Unfortunately, there was to be just one further sighting on 22nd September. This year there were no sightings reported but it can surely only be a matter of time before this species is seen every year.

**Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* Resident**

A common bird on the reserve, recorded in all months of the year with the higher counts usually coming from July onwards. However, unusually, the only double figure count last year came in January. Numbers this year were still a bit lower than some years but there was an improvement from July. Frogs were very much a part of the menu, particularly in early spring, and up to six herons were seen on the Wet Grassland in March hunting for these amphibians. Up to three were also seen at the Dragonfly Ponds, probably with the same prey in mind. On 13th May one was found dead on the Scrubland (JK), probably having hit overhead power lines in windy conditions . On 26th May one was observed struggling with a medium sized eel by the Kingfisher Pond late in the afternoon (PM/BM). On 6th and 9th June several birds on the Duck Marsh included one with a broken wing (JB/MB), probably another victim of power lines. There were sightings on all the wetland areas but the Duck Marsh and riverside trees again held the most birds from July onwards. Up to seven were seen in the trees in July and August but October produced some of the best counts with between eight and 10 birds on the Duck Marsh following the autumn cut. Numbers fell back again in November with no more than seven in total but the Duck Marsh continued to attract the highest numbers with seven or eight on several dates in December and a count of ten there on 8th (DC/EC). Birds were also daily visitors to the Dipping Ponds later in the day once all the visitors had gone The highest counts each month are shown below.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |   |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|----|
| J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O  | N | D  |
| 5 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 11 | 7 | 10 |

### **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* **Frequent Visitor**

First recorded on 26th July 2006, this species has now been reported in each of the last eight years but sightings in the last two years have increased dramatically with birds reported on 33 dates in 2012 and 63 dates in 2013. Many more sightings almost certainly went unreported this year as this bird becomes an increasingly common site over the reserve. The majority involved single birds but two were reported on several dates, three on four dates and five on one date. Grass cutting on the farmland and ploughing on Tim's Field is almost guaranteed to bring in kites these days and five were seen on and over Tim's Field as it was being ploughed on 14th June (JK/JB/MB). Other interesting sightings involved one being mobbed by a common buzzard over the farmland on 4th May (LRSPBG); one being harassed by a common tern over Tim's Field on 24th June (DAN) and one again being harassed by a tern over the Lagoon on 25th June (PM/BM). On 8th August one was watched circling with a common buzzard over the John Ackroyd Meadow (PM/BM). The following table shows the number of dates that birds were recorded each month.

| Month     | Number of Dates | Details                                 |
|-----------|-----------------|---|
| January   | 2               | Single birds only                       |
| February  | 9               | Two birds on two dates                  |
| March     | 7               | Two birds on two dates                  |
| April     | 2               | Single birds only                       |
| May       | 3               | Single birds only                       |
| June      | 12              | Five on one date and two on one date    |
| July      | 15              | Three on two dates and two on two dates |
| August    | 4               | Three on one date and two on one date   |
| September | 1               | Single bird only                        |
| October   | 0               |   |
| November  | 3               | Three birds on one date                 |
| December  | 5               | Two birds on one date                   |
| Total     | 63              |   |

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* **Resident Breeder**

There were sightings most days throughout the year with birds frequently seen hunting over the reserve. On 7th April around 50 crows circled low over a big female sparrowhawk as it plucked a wood pigeon at the edge of Tim's Field (PM/BM). On 20th April four birds were observed displaying over the reserve (PC/PS et al) and on 28th April three were displaying over the river path (PG/PC). Like last year linnets were a favourite prey of the smaller males and on 24th April one was observed being mobbed by about 40 linnets on Tim's Field (MW). There was again ample evidence of females preying on stock doves in the Manager's Garden. On 16th July, however, a female was pursued by some very bold swallows over Tim's Field (PM/BM). At least one great spotted woodpecker and several wood pigeons fell prey to sparrowhawks in the Coppice as did a magpie on the path to the Manager's Garden. On 27th August a male was watched pursuing brown hawker dragonflies (JB). On 9th November one killed a robin in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC). There were no reports of juveniles this year but a pair almost certainly bred again in woodland on the far bank of the river.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* **Frequent Visitor**

Last year had been the best to date in terms of numbers of reported sightings - birds were seen on 18 dates in total. This year was even better with sightings reported on 21 dates. There was an unconfirmed report of two displaying over the reserve on 16th February but single birds were then recorded on two dates in March, five in April, three in May, two in June, one in July, two in August, two in September and two in November. In all cases except one sightings were of birds over the reserve. However, on 28th April one was reported landing on the farmland (PC).

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* **Scarce Visitor**

A new bird for the reserve in 2012, one was photographed high over the Dragonfly Ponds on 13th June. The record was subsequently accepted by YNU. There were no reported sightings this year.

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no sightings this year. One that flew over the reserve on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2008 was the first and only record.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* **Resident Breeder**

After four consecutive successful years nesting in one of the barn owl boxes in the Yorkshire Water compound last year was a bit of an anti climax when it was found that the birds had not nested. This may have been a result of the cold spring and very wet summer and/or a lack of prey but successful nesting was resumed again this year. Birds were recorded on the reserve from the beginning of the year and both male and female were seen at the nest box for the first time on 16th March (PA). On 31st March one "stole" a small rodent from a barn owl on the ground on the Scrubland (PM/BM et al) and birds were regularly seen hunting there subsequently. On 22nd April the birds were observed mating on the nest box (JB/MB) and on 14th July two juveniles made their first appearance on the ledge of the box (PM/BM). The juveniles were not seen at the box after that and it is assumed they flew the same or following day. There were no sightings at all after 27th July until 14th August when two were seen on the John Ackroyd Meadow and the male was seen at the nest box (PA et al). There were further sightings of single birds throughout the remainder of August but there was then a gap of three weeks with no sightings. There were reports of a single bird on several dates in October and on 26th October two were seen calling near the bridge (PC)). On 3rd and 10th November two birds were reported at the nest box (BJ). One again visited the box on 13th November (PA). In the latter part of November a bird was seen on several dates perched in a large willow on the old Barkers site and on 29th and 30th the male bird was seen over the Butterfly Bank. Birds continued to hunt over the reserve to the end of the year. In July a very young juvenile was found on a path in woodland in Horsforth, having fallen out of a nest. The bird was reared by volunteers and released on the reserve on 29th July when it flew off strongly (JB/MB).

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* **Scarce Visitor**

Prior to 2012 there had been just one reported sighting of a hobby on 10th July 2005. In 2012 one was seen just off the reserve on 7th July. This year there were no sightings.

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius* **Infrequent Visitor**

There were no confirmed sightings this year.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* **Scarce Visitor**

There were two records this year. On 23rd January one flew low over the farmland before landing briefly on the laid hedge by the roadside (JB/PM). On 7th April one was reported over the Scrubland (PA).

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* **Casual Breeder and Winter Visitor**

It was another excellent year for this species with breeding confirmed for the second year running. Water Rails are notoriously secretive and there are probably many more on site in the winter months than we realise. Modern technology can help to gain a better idea of numbers present and, following advice from BTO, it was decided to try playing taped recordings of water rail calls on the wetlands in the early part of the year. Using this method birds called back on both the Lagoon and Wet Grassland on 2nd January and a WeBS count on 14th January produced three calling birds on the Lagoon and one on the Wet Grassland. On 9th January one flushed four snipe on the far bank of the Lagoon. Birds were seen almost daily in the Reedbed from 27th January with two there on 11th February. On the same day a bird was also seen at the Dragonfly Ponds. A ringed bird provided good views on the far riverbank from the river path on five dates between 3rd and 10th April. Two birds were seen on the path between the Reedbed on 15th and 18th May (PA) and one was heard in the same area on 21st May. There was only one record in June - a single bird in the Reedbed on 25th - and none in July but on 21st August an adult and juvenile were seen on the Duck Marsh (PA). On 14th September two juveniles were seen on the Duck Marsh (JH). At least two birds were calling there on 15th September (PG). An adult and juvenile were again seen on the Duck Marsh on 2nd October (ABI). There were sightings in the Reedbed most days from 20th October with two birds on two dates. With water levels low in November due to habitat management work there were regular sightings on the muddy margins of the Lagoon and around the islands. On 13th November a juvenile was again reported on the Wet Grassland (DC/EC). In December there were no sightings on the Lagoon but birds were seen on the Wet Grassland, Reedbed and Duck Marsh.

**Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no sightings this year. An adult bird was present on the Wet Grassland for five days from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005.

### **Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Resident Breeder**

This is a common bird on all the wetland areas. Double figure counts can also be made on the farmland near the river bank, especially in the winter months. Thirteen were seen here on 7th January (PM/BM) with up to nine on several other dates. A total of 19 were on the Lagoon and riverbank on 20th January (GP). An early morning WeBS visit on 10th March produced a total of 27 birds - the highest of the year. By way of contrast, the WeBS visit on 12th May only produced three birds. The first young appeared on the Duck Marsh on 12th June - a family of six (DC/EC) - more than five weeks later than last year, presumably due to the very cold spring. The first young (2) were on the Lagoon on 16th June and on the Wet Grassland (1) on 19th June. One pair is also thought to have bred on the Dragonfly Ponds as two juveniles were seen here on several occasions from 4th July. New families continued to appear in August and September and two adults with two small chicks were seen on the grass by the Visitor Centre on 4th August (PM/BM) - so where did they nest? Four small chicks were reported on the Wet Grassland as late as 15th September (DC/EC). Counts in October and November were lower than last year but in December were very similar to last year with up to 16 birds being seen on the farmland close to the river bank some days. Monthly maxima (adults only) are shown below.

| J  | F | M  | A  | M | J | J | A  | S  | O  | N  | D  |
|----|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| 19 | 9 | 27 | 10 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 12 | 16 | 13 | 11 | 22 |

### **Coot *Fulica atra* Resident Breeder**

Numbers in the early part of the year were broadly in line with last year with a best count of 42 on 20th January. Probably due to the cold spring the first three chicks were not seen in the Reedbed until 19th May (DC/EC), exactly a month later than last year. The first family of five chicks appeared on the Wet Grassland just three days later on 22nd May (DC/EC) and on 26th May the first family of four chicks was seen on the Lagoon (PM/BM). By 1st June there were family parties on all four wetland areas. On 15th June two new families, each of four chicks, were on the Wet Grassland and a new family of six was on the Lagoon on 24th June (PM/BM). Despite intense mink activity in July and August numbers of adults were

higher than last year but they fell away sharply in September with a best count of just 13 adults the lowest for that month since 2003. Numbers dropped further in October, November and December with best counts of 8, 6 and 3 respectively the lowest for those months since 2001. The usual influx of birds in the latter part of the year just didn't happen this year, probably due to weather conditions. Monthly maxima (adults only) are shown below.

| J  | F  | M  | A  | M  | J  | J  | A  | S  | O | N | D |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|
| 42 | 31 | 24 | 25 | 16 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 13 | 8 | 6 | 3 |

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* **Migrant Breeder**

Birds typically arrive on the reserve in February and the first one this year was seen on the riverbank and farmland on 16th (PC), four days later than last year. A second bird arrived on 1st March and there were daily sightings thereafter. Mating was observed on the middle island on the Lagoon on 29th March with most of the area frozen over at the time, Three birds were seen on the riverbank near the bridge on 7th April (PM/BM); four were on the Lagoon on 1st May (DC/EC) and three were there on 4th May (BM). A single chick made its first appearance on the middle island on 15th May (PA). Four adults were again present on 16th and 21st May (JK) but there was no sign of a second pair attempting to nest. On 9th June an adult and juvenile were seen on the grass between the Lagoon and Duck Marsh (JB/MB) but on 13th June the juvenile was back on the middle island. The two adults and juvenile were regular visitors to Tim's Field from 19th June but there were no sightings after 10th July.

**Little (Ringed) Plover** *Charadrius dubius* **Migrant Visitor**

Numbers of sightings have declined over recent years. There was one in 2011 and none in 2012. Fortunately, there was a considerable improvement this year, albeit most of the sightings probably involved the same two or three birds. Two on the Duck Marsh on 16th April were the first of the year (LJ) and there were then sightings most days until 5th June involving one or two birds. All sightings except one were on the Duck Marsh. On 28th April two birds were observed mating (JH) but there was no subsequent evidence of successful nesting. There were no sightings after 5th June.

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula* **Migrant Visitor**

There have been no records in the last six years. There were just two sightings in 2007.

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* **Scarce Visitor**

There have been no records in the last five years.

**Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* **Casual Breeder**

The best count of the year came on 5th January with between 100 and 120 birds seen flying over the reserve (JC/PC). There were several double figure counts on the farmland later in the month with 50 on 17th (DAN) and 32 on 19th (PA) the best. Sightings were few and far between in February and March but one or two birds started to be seen on the Lagoon and Duck Marsh in April with a best count of five on 10th April. Birds continued to be seen on the middle island on the Lagoon and the central strip on the Duck Marsh throughout May but there was no sign of successful breeding. One nest was found on the middle island on 1st June with one unhatched egg (JB). There was only one sighting of a single bird in June and no other reports until 13th November when seven birds were seen on the bottom island on the Lagoon (DC/EC). On 19th December 50 flew over the wetlands just after dawn, having possibly just taken off from the Duck Marsh (JB/MB) and on 21st December seven flew over the Lagoon (PA et al). A few pairs have nested on Tim's Field in recent years but cutting and ploughing had to be delayed until June this year and there was no evidence of breeding. Maximum numbers seen each month are shown below.

| J   | F  | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D  |
|-----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 120 | 25 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 1 | - | - | - | - | 7 | 50 |

**Knot** *Calidris canutus* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no sightings this year. A bird on the Duck Marsh on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2006 was the first record for the reserve.

**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* **Infrequent Visitor**

A single bird seen on the Duck Marsh on 1st February 2012 was the first record since May 2006. There were no sightings this year.

**Jack Snipe** *Lymnocyptes minimus* **Passage/Winter Visitor**

Last year produced three sightings between 8th March and 3rd April. This year there were again three reported sightings but at the other end of the year. One was photographed on the Wet Grassland on 19th October (PS); one was seen at the edge of the Reedbed on 20th October and one was again seen on the Wet Grassland on 6th November (NAJ).

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* **Passage/Winter Visitor**

The Duck Marsh again produced the most sightings with the margins of the Lagoon also productive. The highest counts typically occurred when birds were accidentally flushed during habitat management work and surveys. On 9th January four were flushed by a water rail on the far bank of the Lagoon (BH) but 24 flushed at the edge of the Lagoon during survey work on 13th January proved to be the highest count of the year. Fifteen were recorded during a water rail survey on 14th January, 12 of these on the Lagoon. On 7th February 10 were recorded on the Lagoon and four on the Duck Marsh (MB). Seventeen on the Duck Marsh on 6th April was an excellent count for the time of year (PC/PS) and 11 were seen here the next day (PA). One on the Duck Marsh on 26th April was the last of the spring and there were then no further sightings until 16th July when one flew off the Dragonfly Ponds and onto the Wet Grassland (PM/BM). A bird was also accidentally flushed at the Dragonfly Ponds two days later (JB). There was just one further sighting in July and two in August, one of these at the new ponds near the Manager's Garden (JB). A single bird was reported on the Wet Grassland on 15th September (DC/EC) and from 21st September there were regular reports of up to four birds, the majority of these on the Duck Marsh. There were a few sightings on the other three water bodies and two were seen at one of the new ponds on 13th October during a WeBS visit. At least six were accidentally flushed on the wetlands during habitat management work on 25th October (DAN) - this the highest count in the last three months of the year. The numbers of dates that birds were recorded in the various habitats are shown below. Last year's figures are shown in brackets for comparison.

| Lagoon     | Duck Marsh | Reedbed  | Wet<br>Grassland | Other    |
|------------|------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| 22<br>(16) | 37<br>(37) | 7<br>(3) | 6<br>(3)         | 9<br>(3) |

Maximum monthly counts are shown below.

| J  | F  | M | A  | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|----|----|---|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | 14 | 9 | 17 | - | - | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 4 |

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* **Scarce Visitor**

No sightings were reported this year. This species has only been recorded on the reserve on three occasions.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* **Scarce Visitor**

No sightings were reported this year. This species was recorded for the first time on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2006 when a single bird was found on the Duck Marsh.

**Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* **Scarce Visitor**

Last year produced just one record - a single bird flying over the Lagoon on 2nd May. There were no reported sightings this year.

**Curlew** *Numenius arquata* **Migrant Visitor**

Last year was poor but this year was even worse with sightings reported on just four dates. One flew over the Lagoon on 1st March (JK); one again flew over on 10th March (MW); two flew over the Manager's Garden on 7th April (PA) and one flew over Tim's Field on 19th April (DAN).

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* **Infrequent Visitor**

This is very much a winter visitor to the reserve, most likely to be encountered in and around the Coppice later in the day. There were four records this year. One flew over the Lagoon on 1st January (JB); one was seen in the Coppice on 4th March (JK); two flew out of the Coppice at dusk on 24th November (PM/BM) and one flew out of the Coppice at dawn on 19th December (JB/MB).

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* **Infrequent Visitor**

It was another poor year with sightings reported on just four dates - all on the Duck Marsh. Two were there on 9th March (PA), one on 13th March (AB/SG), one on 1st April (DC/EC) and one on 16th April (PM/BM).

**Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* **Infrequent Visitor**

There were no sightings again this year. In 2010 two birds were reported on two dates. These were the first records since 28th March 2002.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* **Infrequent Visitor**

This species is predominantly a passage bird in Britain with a few staying throughout the winter. There were no records last year or this year. The last sighting was on 3rd May 2011.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* **Scarce Visitor**

There have been no sightings in the last seven years. This species was recorded for the first time in 2006 when a single bird was seen on the Duck Marsh.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* **Passage Visitor**

Following a decline in sightings over recent years there was a considerable improvement last year. The improvement was maintained this year. One on the Duck Marsh on 10th April was the first of the year (DC/EC). A single bird was on the Lagoon on 14th and 15th with two there on 18th April (JK). On 26th April one was seen on the middle island on the Lagoon and two were on the Duck Marsh the next day (DC/EC). Birds were reported on the Duck Marsh or Lagoon on five dates between 1st May and 19th May with two on two dates. There was just one sighting in June - a single bird flying from the Lagoon to the Duck Marsh on 7th (JB) - and none in July. On 3rd August one was seen on one of the tern rafts on the Lagoon (JC et al) and on 4th October one was again on the Lagoon (JB). This was to be the last sighting of the year.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* **Frequent Visitor**

There were several 200+ counts on the Lagoon in January with the highest 300+ on 23rd (PM/JB) with a good third of the water frozen over at the time. There were several reports of between 150 and 200

in February but a count of 400+ on the Lagoon in thick snow on 24th March was the highest of the year (PM/BM). This was an exceptional total for March with the next highest just 192. Numbers fell away sharply in April with sightings on just five dates. A few birds were present throughout May and June but numbers started to build again in July with birds loafing on Tim's Field daily in the first three weeks of the month and up to 80 counted with a few juveniles among them. Birds were daily visitors to the Lagoon again from the latter part of July but only in small numbers, 55 on the freshly cut farmland being the highest August count. October produced the joint highest count of the year in 2012 but numbers in September and October this year were considerably lower with 114 on the Lagoon on 24th October by far the highest. There were several 100+ counts on the Lagoon in November with 129 on 10th the highest (WeBS). 120 were there on 16th and 17th (DC/EC). December too produced several 100+ counts on the Lagoon with 160 on 25th the highest (PM/BM). The biggest count of the month, however, came on 15th during a WeBS visit - 264 with birds on the Lagoon, farmland and in the compound. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J    | F   | M    | A  | M  | J | J  | A  | S  | O   | N   | D   |
|------|-----|------|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| 300+ | 200 | 400+ | 25 | 17 | 4 | 80 | 55 | 25 | 114 | 129 | 264 |

**Common Gull** *Larus canus* **Frequent Visitor**

Counts in January and February were generally rather similar to last year but 90 on the Lagoon in at least six inches of snow on 24th March was the highest March count since the reserve opened and the highest of the year (PM/BM). Sightings are always few and far between in April, May and June and this year was no exception with a single bird on just one date in April, sightings on two dates in May and three dates in June with either just one or two birds reported. A few birds loafed on Tim's Field with Black-headed Gulls in July with a best count of 21. There was only one reported sighting in August - 20 birds on the freshly cut farmland on 8th. For the first time ever there were no sightings reported in September and there was just one record in October - 15 on the Lagoon on 24th. Birds could be seen on the Lagoon most days in November and December with 48 there on 12th November the highest (PM/BM). There were also regular

gatherings on the farmland of up to 30 birds. Monthly maxima are shown below.

| J  | F  | M  | A | M | J | J  | A  | S | O  | N  | D  |
|----|----|----|---|---|---|----|----|---|----|----|----|
| 30 | 60 | 90 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 21 | 20 | - | 15 | 48 | 29 |

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

Recorded in all months except February and September this year. The majority of the sightings were on the Lagoon with either one or two birds present, often immatures. However, on 14th June six were seen on or over Tim's Field while it was being ploughed (PM/BM) and eight were observed loafing here on 22nd and 23rd June (DC/EC). One or two birds were also seen on the farmland on several dates.

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* **Infrequent Visitor**

There were just three reported sightings this year. One was on the Lagoon on 2nd January (BH) and 17th May (PM/BM). On 23rd June nine were loafing on Tim's Field with other gulls (DC/EC). Groups of large gulls flying high over the reserve towards dusk in the winter months may well have included this species.

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

Sightings are limited to the occasional fly over and there had only been one confirmed sighting in the previous seven years. However, in 2012 a bird was seen by three observers flying over the Wet Grassland on 19th December. There were no records this year.

**Iceland Gull** *Larus glaucooides* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no records this year. Two 1<sup>st</sup> winter birds that flew over the Willow Path on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2009 were the first and only record for the reserve.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo* **Migrant Breeder**

What promised to be the best year yet for this species ended abruptly on 30th June when a mink went on the rampage on the Lagoon. Up to this point all had been going well. The first bird of the spring flew over the Lagoon on 28th April (PC/PG), 10 days later than last year. There were no further sightings until 5th May when one arrived on the Lagoon(DC/EC). Over the next week up to six birds were reported

with eight on 14th May (JB/MB). One of the rafts on the Lagoon again proved popular, a pair settling here from 16th May. Nine birds were reported on 27th May (PC) with 10 some days from 6th June. The first chick made an appearance on the raft on 16th June and by 21st four were visible. Eleven adults were recorded on 26th June (PA). With possibly three or four nests in the vegetation on the middle island it looked like being our best breeding season to date but then disaster struck on 30th June when the mink arrived. By the end of the day all chicks on the raft had gone and most adults had disappeared. The next day two terns were observed hovering over a mink as it swam across the Lagoon. Up to three adults were seen some days up to 13th July but there were no sightings after this date.

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* **Scarce Visitor**

This was a new bird for the reserve in 2011 with four flying over on 24th July. In 2012 there was an unconfirmed report of one with common terns on one of the rafts on 19th May. This year there no reported sightings.

**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia domest* **Frequent Visitor**

These birds do tend to be overlooked by birdwatchers and there was just one reported sighting again this year - around 30 flying over the Lagoon on 20th January (GP). However, a flock of more than thirty birds can be seen daily on the roof of the big warehouse on Town Street near the reserve entrance and these birds do regularly fly over the reserve.

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

Most sightings were again on the farmland and in the Manager's Garden with just a few records from other habitats. This species tends to be very timid and most birds usually vacate the Manager's Garden long before the observer reaches the hide. However, 28 were counted under the feeders and on the feeder trays in very snowy conditions on 14th January (PM/BM). Birds did occasionally visit the Sensory Garden for spilled seed and up to three were seen here from the Visitor Centre, providing excellent close views. Among other good counts 38 were feeding on seed on Tim's Field very early in the day on 23rd June; 20+ flew out of the Manager's Garden on 26th June and 20th July (PM); c30 flew over the Manager's Garden on 8th

November and 25 flew over the farmland on 19th November (PM/BM).

**Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus* **Resident Breeder**

Between 100 and 200 birds visited Tim's Field most days for seed from the beginning of January to the end of March. Numbers fell away sharply thereafter but between 180 and 200 were there at 7.00pm on 12th April (PM/BM). Several pairs again nested on the reserve, mainly in the Coppice. In September good numbers visited the Coppice to feed on an abundant elderberry crop. In November and December more than 200 were on Tim's Field some days feeding on another excellent fodder radish seed crop with lesser numbers on the farmland.

**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* **Frequent Visitor**

Although classed as a frequent visitor the actual number of reported sightings tends to be very low. This is probably because the species rarely ventures much beyond the entry road or car park. There were just five reported sightings this year - all between 12th May and 8th September - and involving two birds on one occasion. Single birds were seen in the car park on three dates.

**Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* **Scarce Visitor**

This declining summer visitor had only been recorded on two occasions prior to 2012 so a first year bird that spent a week on the reserve in July 2012 was a bit of a bonus. There were no sightings this year.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* **Scarce Visitor**

First recorded on the reserve in 2008, there was one sighting in August 2010 and one on 31st July last year. Early this year pellets found in the Mike Sheldon Hide suggested that a Barn Owl had been roosting there and at 6.30am on 19th March one was seen on the Coppice fence being harassed by two crows (JB). At 8.00am the same day the bird was seen flying from the hide and into the Coppice (JB/DAN). On 26th March an e-mail was received from a local resident in property across the river reporting a light coloured owl hunting low on the Scrubland towards dusk over the previous few evenings. At 6.30pm on 28th March the bird was seen hunting at the Dragonfly Ponds and shortly afterwards quartering the Scrubland,

eventually flying off over the Wet Grassland (PM/BM). At 7.15pm the same evening it was again seen leaving the Mike Sheldon Hide (JB/MB et al). There was a brief sighting on the Scrubland at 11.00am on 31st March (PC et al) and at 8.00pm the same day the bird was watched hunting over the Scrubland for around half an hour (PM/BM et al). At one point it caught a small rodent, only to have it snatched from its grasp by a kestrel. On 12th April an evening of scanning the Scrubland was curtailed by heavy rain but at 8.30pm the bird was seen briefly perched on the Coppice fence by the roadside (JB/MB). There were no further sightings until 10th July when a bird was seen on the Coppice fence at 11.30pm (PM/BM). This was the last sighting of the year.

### **Little Owl *Athene noctua* Casual Breeder**

Last year a pair bred on the reserve for the first time, raising at least three juveniles. There were no sightings this year until 7th April when one was seen on the Sludge Lagoon fence (PA) - the same area where most sightings occurred last year. On 17th April one was reported flying over the fence (DC/EC) but on 5th May the adult female was found dead near the Visitor Centre with a partially ejected egg. There were no further sightings until 27th July when one was reported on the Sludge Lagoon fence again (PA). There were sightings on three dates in August, two in September and the last one on 13th October. Five of these were in the Yorkshire Water compound and one on the Sludge Lagoon fence.

### **Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* Infrequent Visitor**

There were just three records this year. One flew over the Lagoon on 16th June (MW) and one was calling in trees on the far riverbank near the weir at 10.00pm on 20th July during a Bat Walk (JB/MB et al). On 18th December one flew low across the entry road by the bridge at dusk (PM/BM).

### **Swift *Apus apus* Migrant Visitor**

This species continues to be remarkably consistent in its arrival date at Rodley each spring as the following shows:

|      |            |      |            |
|------|------------|------|------------|
| 2006 | 26th April | 2010 | 25th April |
| 2007 | 25th April | 2011 | 29th April |
| 2008 | 26th April | 2012 | 26th April |
| 2009 | 25th April | 2013 | 27th April |

This year five birds over the reserve on 27th April were the first of the year (PC/PG et al). Numbers over the wetlands in May were rather lower than last year with the best count being just 20+. However, numbers increased considerably in June with around 100 over the Lagoon and later around the new Swift Tower at the back of the Reedbed on 11th (JB/MB). At least 50 over the Lagoon on 10th July was the highest count that month with around 25 there on 15th July (PM/BM). Twenty-five were counted over the river bridge on 21st July during an early morning WeBS visit. Last year, despite the poor summer, there were daily sightings throughout August but this year sightings were reported on just three dates with a single bird over the Willow Path on 13th the last of the year (PM/BM). Although no birds attempted to nest in the new Swift Tower this year there was certainly some interest and hopes are high for 2014.

### **Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* **Resident Breeder**

The pattern of sightings was very similar to last year with birds seen on just six dates in the first four months of the year, four of these in the Reedbed and two on the river. There was a considerable improvement from the middle of May with sightings on the Lagoon, Reedbed, Duck Marsh and on the river. Two were even recorded in the car park on 25th June (JAR) and on 8th July one was seen at the Education Pond (DW). Most sightings involved single birds but three were seen on the Kingfisher Pool on 28th June (DAN); two were on the riverbank near the Fish Pass on 11th July (JB/MB) and two were by the water inlet pipe on the Lagoon on 14th July (PC). One was reported at the Dipping Ponds on 29th July (JK) and 24th August (PA). There were further sightings of two birds together near the bridge on 17th August (JM) and 7th September (PA), on the river from the river path on 8th September and on the Lagoon on 11th September, the observer reporting one adult and a juvenile in this case (ABI). With river levels low, there were several sightings on the Fish Pass in September with two birds there on 20th (JB/MB). In November and December, with river levels high, the Lagoon was the most likely place to see this species. One flying low over the compound and Butterfly Bank on 20th December was rather more of a surprise (PM). Surprisingly, activity on the Kingfisher Pool was virtually non-existent in the last five months of the year.

**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis* **Infrequent Visitor**

In the past each year usually produced two or three records but there were none in 2012 or 2013.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* **Resident Breeder**

This is a regular visitor to the reserve from woodland across the river. Sightings were unusually few and far between in the first five months of 2012 and while there were rather more this year the last seven months of the year were far more productive with sightings almost daily. The Willow Path and Manager's Garden produced the large majority of sightings. The first juvenile was seen in the Coppice on 25th June (LK/BM) and there were several subsequent sightings of juvenile males in the Manager's Garden and on the Willow Path. Fat feeders on the Willow Path proved particularly popular. On 20th August one fell prey to a sparrowhawk in the Coppice (PM/BM) but both males and females continued to be seen virtually daily to the end of the year.

**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* **Infrequent Visitor**

This species is barely hanging on in this part of the valley. After three blank years there were records on three dates in 2011 and four dates in 2012. However, there were no sightings reported this year.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* **Migrant Visitor**

Last year was a poor one for this species with many nests on the river almost certainly washed out with the high river levels. This year was even worse, despite a good summer. The first sightings were reported on 13th April with between 20 and 30 over the Dragonfly Ponds and river. This was more than two weeks later than the first date in 2012. There was another report of around 20 on 16th April (LJ) but apart from these there were no other double figure counts recorded. Good numbers of hirundines over the reserve in August almost certainly included a few but the only sighting reported was six over the Lagoon at 8.30pm on 13th (PM/BM). This was also the last sighting of the year, more than five weeks earlier than the last record in 2012. Hopefully the new sand martin nesting bank being constructed on the Lagoon will give this species a helping hand.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* **Migrant Visitor and Casual Breeder**

It was another encouraging year for this species with some good counts reported. Two on the Scrubland at 7.30pm on 12th April were the first of the spring (JB/MB et al), nine days later than last year. Around 12 were over the Dragonfly Ponds the next day (GA). The nesting platforms in the dumper truck shed again proved popular with birds first seen feeding young here on 19th May (DC/EC). At least four pairs nested here this year. Birds were seen daily around the Visitor Centre, often perching on the overhead wires. Twenty-five were counted on the wires near the radio mast on 10th August (PM). There were some good evening counts in August. Around 60 were over Tim's Field on 1st; 70+ were over the Coppice and Mike Fisk Meadow on 2nd and 200+ hirundines over Tim's Field at 9.00pm on 13th were mainly swallows (PM/BM). On 20th August at 8.45pm around 300 hirundines over Tim's Field were again mainly swallows (PM/BM). There were some good counts on the overhead wires near the Visitor Centre in September. Thirty-three were there on 13th September (PM/BM). Overhead wires near the Manager's Garden also produced good numbers with 76 counted here on 25th September (DC/EC). This was also the last sighting of the year, just four days earlier than last year.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica* **Migrant Visitor**

A single bird seen over the road near the Lagoon during an early morning WeBS visit on 14th April was the first of the spring, seven days later than last year. There were no further sightings until 24th April. Numbers remained low with c10 over the Lagoon in wet conditions on 29th May (PM/BM) the best count up to the end of July. There was a considerable improvement in August with young birds on the wing. Around 25 were over the Wet Grassland late in the day on 11th August (PM/BM) and there were several other double figure counts here subsequently. Good numbers of birds were seen over the Coppice and Tim's Field on several evenings in September along with other hirundines but accurate counts were difficult in the fading light. Three seen over the Lagoon during a WeBS visit on 22nd September were the last of the year, just one day earlier than last year.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis* **Passage Visitor**

The number of sightings has declined considerably over recent years but there was some improvement in 2010 with a number of records in the last three months of the year. However, 2011 was very poor with just three records submitted and 2012 produced just one record. There was some improvement again this year with birds reported on 10 dates. One was seen by one of the seed hoppers on Tim's Field on 18th January but on 28th January a bird was found dead in the same area (DAN). In between, up to three birds were seen on the farmland manure heap on four dates (DC/EC et al). On 7th February one was on overhead wires near the manure heap (PM/BM). In March two were on the manure heap on 20th and three were there on 27th (PA et al). There were no further sightings until 6th November when two were again seen in the same area (PA).

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* **Infrequent Visitor**

There were again no sightings this year. There has now only been one confirmed sighting of this species in the last eleven years.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* **Casual Breeder**

For the first time in the reserve's history there were sightings in every month of the year and one pair bred. The most productive area in the early part of the year was the manure heap at the edge of the farmland but from late March there were regular sightings of one or two birds at the Fish Pass. On 5th June three were seen below the weir (PM/BM) and on 11th June contractors working on the Fish Pass had to stop proceedings when a nest with eggs was discovered in the stonework. Unfortunately, the nest had been predated by the next day but a subsequent nesting attempt clearly paid dividends when two adults and a juvenile were seen there on 15th September (PG/PC). On 22nd September five flew over the Fish Pass during an early morning WeBS visit and three were seen there on 22nd October (JB/MB). Birds were also seen in the Yorkshire Water compound and the farmland manure heap remained popular throughout the year.

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* **Resident Breeder**

Almost all sightings are in the vicinity of the manure heap on the farmland, in the Yorkshire Water compound and around the Visitor Centre. January and February produced just one sighting last year but this year one or two birds were seen virtually daily on the

farmland. From late March there were a few sightings round the Visitor Centre and on 26th May an adult was seen with a juvenile in the compound (GJB) where birds almost certainly nested in 2011 and 2012. One or two birds were seen regularly thereafter around the Visitor Centre and in the compound. On 28th July an adult and juvenile were seen on a car roof by the Visitor Centre (PM/BM). There were daily sightings in the last three months of the year, usually in the compound or by the farmland manure heap, with three birds on several occasions and five on 1st December (PC).

**Dipper** *Cinclus cinclus* **Infrequent Visitor**

A bird by the weir on 25th June (MB) was the first sighting since 29th December 2010. On 21st August two were reported just below the weir (PM/BM/PA) and on 25th August one was seen from the river path flying upstream during and early morning WeBS visit. It was suggested in last year's report that the new Fish Pass might turn out to be a productive area in the future and this proved to be the case with the first sighting here on 30th August (JB). There were further sightings here on eight dates between 9th September and 27th September with two birds on 23rd (PM/BM). There were no further sightings after 27th September but this may well have been due to high water levels throughout October and much of November and December.

**Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* **Scarce (Winter) Visitor**

First recorded on the reserve in November 2010, there was one sighting in 2011 and one in 2012. This year proved to be the best to date with sightings on five dates between 16th January and 21st April. On 16th January eight were feeding on rosehips at the end of the bridge (ABI). On 25th January 20 were feeding on rosehips by the side of the road opposite the car park entrance (DAN) and 12 birds were again there on 4th February (IW). On 16th March 37 were in the Manager's Garden briefly (PA) and on 21st April 15 were again seen in the same area (DC/EC). Recent extensive planting of rowans on the reserve will hopefully provide a good supply of berries for these colourful visitors in the future.

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* **Resident Breeder**

This remains a very common bird on the reserve and it can be found in every habitat. For the third year running a pair nested in the

Manager's Garden Hide and two young fledged successfully on 13th June. Wrens also nested in a tit box in an elder on the Scrubland, in a tit box at the edge of the Coppice and in an open fronted box on the Willow Path. All young are thought to have fledged successfully. Five juveniles were seen at the edge of the Lagoon on 2nd July (JB/MB) and at least two were reported with an adult in a bush at the Dragonfly Ponds on 26th July (PM/BM).

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis* **Resident Breeder**

This is a very common bird on the reserve and found in most habitats. It is also a daily visitor to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Sensory Garden. Up to six birds were reported around the feeders in the Sensory Garden in January and up to five in the Manager's Garden in snowy conditions. Ten were counted under the feeders in the Sensory Garden on 25th March (MB). Birds were also numerous on the Willow Path. No observers reported juveniles this year but there is no reason to think this species did not enjoy a successful breeding season as the laid hedges on the reserve together with the Coppice provide prime nesting sites.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* **Resident Breeder**

This bird can be seen daily throughout the year in the Manager's Garden and along the Willow Path. Up to four were seen on the Willow Path in the first three months of this year. The first juvenile was reported in the Manager's Garden on 23rd June (DAN et al). An adult and two juveniles were on the Willow Path on 21st July and an adult and one juvenile were there on 10th August (DC/EC). A juvenile was also reported on the Willow Path on 26th August (MW). Surprisingly, no nest boxes were used by robins this year. On 9th November one fell prey to a sparrowhawk in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC).

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* **Scarce Visitor**

First recorded on the reserve in 2006, there had been no further sightings until 2012 when a female was seen on the Scrubland on 1st September. There were no records this year.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* **Scarce Visitor**

There were again no sightings this year. A female in the hedgerow opposite the workshop on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2008 was only the second record for the reserve.

**Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* **Passage Visitor**

Most years tend to produce one or two records at most of this declining species so sightings on four dates in 2012 had to be regarded as a good year. This year there were just two reported sightings. A female was seen on the roof of the Visitor Centre early in the day on 15th April (DAN/DW) and on 14th September a male and female were seen at the edge of the farmland and on the compound fence (PA et al).

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* **Passage Visitor**

The run of poor years continues with sightings on just four dates in 2009, none in 2010, one in 2011, one in 2012 and one again this year. A female was seen on the farmland manure heap on 20th January (PA et al).

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* **Passage Visitor**

Following four blank years there were sightings on five dates in 2012. Unfortunately, there were again no records this year.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula* **Resident Breeder**

Very common all round the reserve. Up to five were seen in the Manager's Garden in the first half of January but eight were there in thick snow on 22nd January (PM/BM). Good numbers of adults were reported around the reserve in the summer months but there was little evidence of successful nesting attempts. A juvenile was reported on the Willow Path on 14th July and one was in the Manager's Garden on 4th August but there were no other records. Typically, numbers visiting the feeders in the Manager's Garden in September and October were low with no more than two reported and birds were generally hard to find. Numbers did increase somewhat in November and December with 11 recorded during an early morning visit on 10th November the best count (DAN et al).

### **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* **Winter Visitor**

There were sightings most days in January and February, usually of 50 birds or less. Among the few bigger counts 100+ were on the farmland on 13th January and c120 were there in snowy conditions the following day (JB). There were sightings on just a handful of dates in March with a best count of c40 on the farmland on 18th (PM/BM). The last birds of the spring were seen on 14th April - 10 were in trees in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC) and a few were in a mixed flock of winter thrushes and starlings on the farmland. The first birds of the autumn arrived on 16th October, four being seen in the poplars (DC/EC). There were no further sightings until 1st November when between 25 and 30 flew over the river behind the Duck Marsh (PM/BM et al). On 11th November flocks of 72 and 40 were seen flying over the farmland (JB). Around 90 flew over the Manager's Garden the next day (PM/BM). There were regular sightings thereafter with most observers reporting no more than 20 birds but c50 flew over the Coppice on 15th November (PM/BM) and 34 were on the farmland on 8th December (PM).

### **Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* **Resident Breeder**

This year was a bit disappointing with fewer singing birds than last year when up to seven were reported. There were just three sightings in what was a very snowy January. The first singing bird was heard near the Lagoon Hide on 7th February (PM/BM) and on 10th birds were singing in roadside trees by the Lagoon and in the Coppice. There were sightings most days from the beginning of March with birds seen and heard in the Coppice, by the Lagoon, on the riverbank and on the Scrubland. Two were singing in the Coppice from early May. Broken egg shell on the Willow Path on 7th June indicated a thwarted nesting attempt, probably in the Coppice, but there were no reports of juveniles this year. Birds were typically hard to find after the middle of July. One was singing in the Coppice on 1st and 2nd August but there were no other records until 20th September when one was observed feeding on elderberries on the Butterfly Bank (PM). There was a report of four on one of the meadows on 13th October but there were no further records until 13th December when a bird was singing in the Coppice in very mild conditions. On 15th December a bird sang for some time on the Butterfly Bank during an early morning WeBS visit and two were seen in the car park. On 18th

December one was again singing on the Butterfly Bank, this time at dusk.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus* **Winter Visitor**

Numbers were a bit higher than last year and there were certainly more sightings in the first part of the year. Among the higher counts c20 were on the farmland in a mixed flock with fieldfares on 7th January (PM/BM); a similar number was in a mixed flock there on 11th February (PM/BM) and around 25 were there on 13th and 17th February (JB/MB). The last records of the spring came on 14th April. Six were seen in trees in the Manager's Garden (PA) and a few were in a mixed flock of winter thrushes and starlings on the farmland. The first birds of the autumn arrived on 13th October. Three were in trees on the Sludge Lagoon and a flock of 51 flew over the reserve during an early morning WeBS visit. There were sightings on several dates in November but with no more than five birds reported. There were sightings on just two dates in December with the highest count being 37 flying over the Mike Fisk Meadow on 16th (JB/MB).

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus* **Frequent Visitor**

There were rather more sightings than last year but most of these came in the first seven months of the year. In January a bird was reported feeding on guelder rose berries in the Sensory Garden on 15th (PM/BM et al) and 23rd (GJB/PA). Very few birds seem to find these palatable so these were interesting sightings. On 22nd January one was seen feeding on rosehips at the side of the bridge (PM/BM). Most sightings in the early part of the year involved just one or two birds but six flew over the compound on 27th March (MB). A bird was singing on the entry road from 14th April to 4th May. From 13th June to 10th July there were daily sightings on the freshly ploughed Tim's Field with often up to seven birds reported including juveniles. Ten were seen there on 25th June (MB). There were no sightings after 10th July until 19th October when two flew over the compound. One was on the farmland on 29th October. On 25th November three flew over the Visitor Centre. In December one or two birds were singing some way off the reserve on several dates and two flew over on 15th.

### **Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia*

#### **Migrant Breeder**

This is a secretive bird, much more likely to be heard than seen in the long vegetation. A bird "reeling" on the Scrubland on 24th April was the first of the year (LJ/PA et al), just two days earlier than last year. On 28th April birds were reeling across the road from the Lagoon Hide and on the Scrubland (PC/PG). Between 1st May and 8th May one reeled in brambles at the edge of the Lagoon. On 5th May four could be heard - two by the Lagoon, one on the Scrubland and one in a patch of wild raspberry by the path to the Manager's Garden (PA). This latter bird was unusually obliging and was both heard and seen well by a number of birdwatchers between 5th and 11th May. Unfortunately, it received a bit too much attention from over enthusiastic birdwatchers and vacated this site after 11th May. On 18th and 20th May one was heard at the Dragonfly Ponds (DC/EC et al) where this species has previously nested. There were no further records until 20th July when one was reported reeling at the edge of the Scrubland behind the Dragonfly Ponds (PA). The bird was heard again at 10.00pm the same day during a bat walk (JB et al). There were no reports of nesting or juveniles but it seems likely that at least one pair nested again.

### **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

#### **Migrant Breeder**

This species enjoyed another reasonably successful year on the reserve. A bird singing in the Reedbed on 22nd April was the first of the spring (DAN). There were regular sightings thereafter with the Reedbed the most productive area but with birds also seen or heard on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh and Wet Grassland. On 8th June birds were observed feeding young at the edge of the Wet Grassland (PG) and in the Reedbed (PB/BM). As in previous years, at least one pair nested at the Dragonfly Ponds. On 7th July a bird was singing in long vegetation there and one was observed feeding a juvenile (PM/BM). A party of five on the Wet Grassland on 16th July included several juveniles (JB/MB) and on 17th July an adult was seen with juveniles at the edge of one of the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM). One was seen by the same pond on 22nd July. A bird seen in the Reedbed on 26th August was the last of the year (DC/EC), just a week later than last year.

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

**Migrant Breeder**

One singing in the Reedbed on 24th April was the first of the year (LJ), ten days earlier than last year. There were no further records until 8th May but there were then regular sightings in the Reedbed with up to four seen. Thick banks of reed on the far bank of the Lagoon have proved productive in recent years and two were seen here on 14th June (PM/BM). Around five birds seen here on 8th and 12th July almost certainly included juveniles (PM/BM). Sightings in August were few and far between and one seen at the edge of the Wet Grassland during an early morning WeBS visit on 25th August was the last of the year, six days later than last year.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* **Migrant Breeder**

There were no reports of over-wintering birds in the early part of the year and a bird singing on the far riverbank opposite the river path during an early morning visit on 14th April was the first of the spring (DAN et al), more than two weeks later than last year. Numbers appeared to be particularly high last year with up to five males singing in the Coppice but no more than three were heard here this year. Away from the Coppice there was just one report of a bird singing in trees behind the Lagoon and several records of one singing on the far riverbank. On 25th June one was also singing on the Scrubland. A juvenile was seen on the Willow Path on 8th June and again on 27th July but there were no other reports of juveniles. Birds were typically hard to find in August with just one sighting of a male and female on the Willow Path on 3rd (DC/EC). Their contact calls could be heard on the riverbank and on the Butterfly Bank in September but a single male in a bush by the roadside (DC/EC) and one in the Manager's Garden (AB) on 25th September were the only sightings. There were no further records until 24th November when an over-wintering male was seen in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC).

**Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* **Migrant Breeder**

The first birds of the spring were recorded on 12th May during an early morning WeBS visit - three near the Lagoon and one in the Coppice. This was just four days later than the first sighting last year. The Coppice again proved to be the best place to see or at least hear this species and there were reports from here daily. Two birds were singing in the Coppice on 6th July and three were seen there the

following day (PC). There were no records from this area after 20th July but there were several sightings in the Manager's Garden between 4th August and 11th September. One was also reported on one of the meadows on 11th September. There were no further sightings after this date. This was more than three weeks later than the last sighting in 2012.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* **Migrant Breeder**

In both 2011 and 2012 trees at the end of the Butterfly Bank have produced a singing male and this year was no exception. A bird was singing here on 28th April ((PC/PG et al). There was another report from the same area on 8th May (DC/EC). There were then no further records until 11th August when a male was seen on the compound fence (PM). One on the Scrubland on 4th September was the last of the year (DC/EC).

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* **Migrant Breeder**

One at the edge of the Coppice on 20th April was the first of the spring (PC/DC/EC), just a day earlier than last year. Five were reported on 26th April and numbers built steadily thereafter. In total between 15 and 20 pairs were estimated to be on territories. Typically, most thick patches of bramble held birds, the one across the road from the Lagoon Hide always being productive with birds easy to see here. Several pairs were on the Scrubland and at least one pair again nested in long vegetation at the Dragonfly Ponds. On 31st May one was reported carrying food to a nest near Co-op Pond (PM/BM). The laid sections of the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge are now also thick enough for nesting with several pairs using this area. A bird sang almost constantly in the hedge just below the Visitor Centre around the middle of June. The first juveniles were reported near the Lagoon Hide on 16th June (DC/EC) and on 21st June a juvenile was being fed on the Wet Grassland fence (JB/MB). On 19th June one fell prey to a sparrowhawk on the John Ackroyd Meadow. Several family parties were reported in July and one bird was observed visiting a nest under a buddleia on the compound banking just opposite the Visitor Centre on 1st August (PM/BM). There were sightings on just five dates in August and one in the Manager's Garden on 11th September was the last of the year (BJ), nine days later than last year.

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* **Migrant Breeder**

There were no reports of over-wintering birds in the early part of the year and one singing in woodland across the river during the evening of 2nd April was the first of the spring (PM/BM), more than two weeks later than last year. Subsequently, birds were heard near the bridge, in the Coppice, near the Lagoon and on the entry road but with most records on the riverbank. Last year at least five were singing round the reserve by 5th April. This year we had to wait until 31st May for the first report of as many as three singing birds (PM/BM) There was the odd record from the Coppice and in the Manager's Garden but again most were on the riverbank. There were no reports of juveniles. A bird singing in the elder across the road from the Visitor Centre on 24th September looked like being the last of the year but there were then several reports of over-wintering birds. One was seen in a large willow close to the ramp to the Duck Marsh Hide on 12th November (PM/BM); one was on the Willow Path in the same area on 22nd December (JK et al); two were in the Manager's Garden on 22nd December (DC/EC) and one was seen in the Mike Fisk Meadow hedge on 26th December (DC/EC).

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* **Migrant Breeder**

A bird singing in the Coppice during the evening on 15th April was the first of the spring (PM/BM), just two days later than last year. By 19th April three were singing in the Coppice with two on the riverbank. The first juvenile was seen just outside the Willow Path Hide on 6th July (BM) with another on the Willow Path the following day (DC/EC). As always the Willow Path was the best place to both hear and see this species. Several birds were seen in mixed feeding parties of tits in August and it appears to have been another good breeding season. A juvenile was seen in the Sensory Garden on 13th September and one was singing in the Coppice on the same date (PM/BM) but a bird seen in the Coppice during an early morning WeBS visit on 22nd September was the last of the year, more than three weeks later than last year.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* **Frequent Visitor**

Despite its status as a Frequent Visitor this species has had three poor years in 2010, 2011 and 2012 with a total of just nine records (and only one of these in 2012). There was some improvement this year with sightings reported on nine dates. On 5th January two were

seen by the Lagoon Hide (PC) and there was a report of two in the Manager's Garden on the same date (DC/EC). There were sightings on five dates in February, all in riverside trees near the bridge with two birds on two dates. On 20th March four were seen on the river path (PA). There were no further sightings until 20th October when one was reported in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC et al). One was also seen on the entry road on 26th October (PC).

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* **Scarce Visitor**

There have been no reported sightings in the last three years. 2010 produced two records.

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* **Resident Breeder**

Parties of up to 10 birds were seen on the Willow Path in the early part of the year with 13 on Bentley's Path on 22nd January (PM/BM) the highest number reported. In March and April one or two birds were regular visitors to the fat ball feeders in the Sensory Garden and on 30th March one was seen taking nesting material to a gorse bush on the Butterfly Bank (GJB) - an area where this species has nested before. Being early nesters, the very cold spring with few insects about may have affected breeding success but two juveniles were seen on the Butterfly Bank on 9th June (JB/MB) and three were on the Willow Path on 4th August (DC/EC). Birds were regular visitors to the fat ball feeders on the Willow Path from early August. There were numerous reports of decent sized parties of birds from August onwards. Around 15 were in a mixed feeding party of tits near the weir on 21st August (PM/BM); c12 were on the Butterfly Bank on 28th August (JB); 14 were in a mixed feeding party there on 9th September (PM/BM); 15 were seen at the edge of the Duck Marsh on 16th October (MW) and 15 were seen near the Fish Pass on 22nd October (JB/MB). However, the largest party, consisting of at least 20 birds, was recorded on the riverbank near the weir on 4th December (PM/BM). Interestingly, in November and December there were regular reports of parties of long-tailed tits still foraging at dusk.

**Marsh Tit** *Poecile palustris* **Scarce Visitor**

There were no sightings this year. Birds were recorded on the reserve in 2002 and 2004.

**Willow Tit** *Poecile montanus* **Casual Breeder**

After a promising start to 2012 sightings came to a sudden halt after 17th March and there were no further sightings that year. This year was looking like a blank but there was one reported sighting on the Willow Path on 13th November (DC/EC).

**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater* **Infrequent Visitor**

Up to and including 2011 each year had produced between one and three sightings of this species and always in the Manager's Garden. However, in 2012 there were three spring sightings and a spate of sightings in the last three months of the year in the Manager's Garden. This year there were sightings on two dates in January with two birds at the feeders in the Manager's Garden on 6th (DC/EC). There were no further reports until 2nd November when one was again seen at the feeders (DC/EC). On 6th November two birds were seen there (PA). Single birds were also reported at the feeders on 8th and 17th November.

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus* **Resident Breeder**

A common bird on the reserve and in surrounding woodland, it can be seen daily on the Willow Path and at the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Sensory Garden. However, numbers in the first few months of the year were on the low side following what was almost certainly a poor breeding season in 2012 as a result of the very cold spring and wet summer. Only 11 nest boxes were used this year but all young appear to have fledged successfully in 10 of these with one nest containing just one unhatched egg. A sparrow terrace box on the side of the workshop contained one nest and the adults were still feeding young there on 12th June. Another cold spring probably didn't help matters this year with few insects about. Few observers reported juveniles but nine were seen on a fat ball feeder on the Willow Path on 4th August (JB). There were also few reports of mixed feeding parties in August and September but at least 30 were in one party seen near the weir on 21st August (PM/BM). Feeders on the Willow Path continued to attract good numbers of birds to the end of the year.

**Great Tit** *Parus major* **Resident Breeder**

This is another very common bird on the reserve with daily sightings on the Willow Path and at the feeders in the Manager's Garden and

Sensory Garden. Blue tits and great tits are taking it in turns to use the nest box on the side of the Visitor Centre and this year it was the turn of great tits again. Nest building started on 13th April and by 9th May nine eggs could be seen. Eight of these hatched on 15th May and all eight young fledged successfully on 4th June. Visitors were again able to enjoy live pictures of the proceedings on the television in the centre. A further 11 nest boxes were used by great tits this year and all young are thought to have fledged successfully in nine of these. Four unhatched eggs were found in one nest and a dead chick in the other. The number of boxes used was disappointing and the lowest since nest box recording began here - again probably a result of poor breeding success in the very cold spring and wet summer of 2012 and the cold spring this year.

**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* **Scarce Visitor**

After four blank years there were sightings on two dates in 2011 and one date in 2012. There were no reported sightings this year.

**Treecreeper** *Certhia familiaris* **Casual breeder**

2012 was the best year to date as regards number of sightings and the fact that one pair nested in a crack in the stonework on the side of the bridge. Nearly all sightings were in the vicinity of the bridge and it was the same again this year, albeit with rather fewer sightings. On 20th February two were seen in trees by the bridge (BH). On 3rd March one was reported in trees in the car park. There were sightings of a single bird in riverside trees by the bridge on three dates in April but there were no reports of nesting activity this year. On 3rd December two were again seen in the car park (LJ) and on 30th December one was reported in trees by the bridge (JB).

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius* **Resident Breeder**

A common bird on the reserve and recorded almost daily throughout the year. Most records typically involved between one and three birds but up to five were seen together on occasions. Riverside trees and the Willow Path are almost guaranteed to provide sightings but birds were seen in all habitats. On 31st March one was watched harassing a barn owl on the Scrubland (PM et al). Activity is always at its busiest in the autumn with birds constantly flying across the reserve on acorn forays and this year was no exception. No observers

reported juveniles this year but breeding may well have occurred in the Coppice.

**Magpie** *Pica pica* **Resident Breeder**

This is still a very common bird on the reserve though no large gatherings were reported this year - fourteen seen together in riverside trees on 26th February (JB) being the highest count. Many blackbird and song thrush nests are certainly predated each year by magpies but they are opportunists and anything smaller than themselves is fair game. On 23rd March one was seen swooping down to take a live bank vole from the road (JB/MB). A few pairs do nest on the reserve and one nest was found in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedgerow bordering the Scrubland this year (JK). Two adults and two juveniles were reported near the Lagoon Hide on 11th July (BM) - the only record of juveniles this year.

**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula* **Resident Breeder**

This remains a very common bird on the reserve with the highest numbers usually seen on the farmland. At least 80 were counted here on 11th March; c150 flew over the farmland on 12th July and c150 were over the compound on 22nd July. However, the biggest count of the year came towards dusk on 25th July when an estimated 450 to 500 streamed over the entry road (PM/BM). There were several reports of juveniles in June and July and one or two pairs almost certainly nested on the reserve. Birds were also daily visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and Sensory Garden.

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus* **Scarce Visitor**

There had been no sightings since 2009 and with no known rookeries in the immediate area round the reserve a flock of 30 birds on Tim's Field during the evening on 31st March 2012 came as a bit of a surprise. There was also a report of two flying over the farmland on 16th December 2012. There were no reported sightings this year.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone* **Resident (Probable Breeder)**

This is a very common bird on the reserve and adjacent farmland. As always some of the biggest counts were on the farmland but there were some decent counts on the reserve too. More than 100 flew over the farmland at dusk on 2nd January (PM). On 7th April at least 50 harassed a female sparrowhawk as it plucked a wood pigeon on

Tim's Field (PM/BM). On 14th June between 200 and 300 crows and jackdaws assembled on Tim's Field while it was being ploughed and on 21st June 64 crows were counted on the freshly seeded field (PM/BM). Around 50 were on the Mike Fisk Meadow on 22nd July and 120 were on the farmland on 18th August (PM). There were no big counts reported in the latter part of the year with no more than 30 on the farmland.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* **Casual Breeder**

Numbers were again generally disappointing. Flocks on the farmland in the early part of the year usually contained no more than 50 birds but around 60 were in a mixed flock with winter thrushes on 11th February (PM/BM); 80 were on overhead wires near the radio mast on 26th February (JB) and 100 were again in a mixed flock with winter thrushes on 14th April (PM/BM). However, much larger flocks were seen on just two days. More than 300 were counted on overhead wires by the radio mast on 22nd March and c450 were on the freshly cut farmland on 5th June (PM/BM). On 27th April one was observed collecting nesting material in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC) but quite where it nested is not known. Numbers in the latter part of the year were similar to last year with no more than 30 reported in November. Birds were virtually absent in December with just six reported on the farmland on 3rd and 15 in trees in the Manager's Garden on 7th.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* **Casual Breeder**

This species had been recorded on the reserve in each of the nine years prior to 2010. However, 2010 produced no sightings and there were just two in 2011. There were no records in 2012 but there was one this year. A female was a surprise visitor to the Manager's Garden on 10th November (NT/PM).

**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus* **Casual Breeder**

The disappointing end to 2012 was followed by an equally disappointing start to 2013 with no sightings at all in January and February. A single bird did visit the feeders in the Manager's Garden on 3rd March (JH et al) and there were sightings on four further dates in March. Two birds were present on 6th April and two appeared on three further dates that month but there were no sightings after 28th April until 14th September when two were reported on overhead

wires near the Manager's Garden (JH). There was no further activity until 6th November when three were on the feeders in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC et al). Two or three birds were recorded daily thereafter to the end of the year. Hopefully numbers will build up again. It's worth remembering that up to 11 birds visited the Manager's Garden in the early part of 2012.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* **Frequent Visitor**

Birds are daily visitors to the feeders in the Manager's Garden for much of the year, usually being absent only in April, May and the first half of June. Numbers in the early part of the year were a little higher than last year with up to eight some days including as many as seven males. This species only occasionally visits the feeders in the Sensory Garden and then no more than two birds. Sightings elsewhere on the reserve were few and far between with just a few in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge and around the margins of the Lagoon. Unusually, there were sightings in the Manager's Garden throughout April with up to four reported. Possibly birds delayed getting down to nesting this year due to the cold spring. There was just one sighting of a single bird in the Manager's Garden in May and again in June. Birds started to visit the feeders again from the middle of July with up to three that month, four in August, five in September, seven in October, six in November and six in December.

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* **Winter Visitor**

This is a very infrequent winter visitor to the reserve. There was just one reported sighting last year and again this year - a single bird in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge on 17th March (JH).

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris* **Resident Breeder**

This is a common visitor to the feeders in the Manager's Garden and to a lesser extent the Sensory Garden. Most days in the first few weeks of the year produced up to 10 in the Manager's Garden but there were a few bigger counts. Fourteen were reported on 5th January (DC/EC), 21 on 9th January (PM/BM) and 20 were in trees there on 23rd January (DC/EC). In between, 29 were counted in the nearby poplars on 12th January (DC/EC). Numbers fell away somewhat from the beginning of February with no further double figure counts reported until July. Birds continued to visit the feeders daily and there were a few sightings on the John Ackroyd Meadow

and at the feeders in the Sensory Garden of one or two birds. On 22nd July 12 were counted on the path to the Manager's Garden but there were no double figure counts at the feeders there until 10th August. Fourteen were reported on 12th August (PM/BM) with 15 on 1st September (DC/EC) including several juveniles. Up to seven also visited the feeders in the Sensory Garden during this period. There were few double figure counts in the last three months of the year with 12 in the Manager's Garden on 20th October (DC/EC) and 10 there on 3rd December (PM/BM) the best.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* **Resident Breeder**

Birds were daily visitors to the feeders in the Sensory Garden from the beginning of the year and numbers in the first three months were somewhat higher than last year. Among the higher counts at the feeders were 20 on 12th January (AT), 25 on 14th January (PM/BM) and 15 on 10th March (DAN et al). Away from the Sensory Garden, 23 were counted in trees in the Manager's Garden on 10th February (DAN et al), though few birds seem to visit the feeders here. Numbers fell away sharply towards the end of March with just two or three birds visiting the feeders in April, May and June. The first juvenile was seen in the Sensory Garden on 13th July (DC/EC), five weeks later than last year, no doubt due to a very cold spring. Numbers started to build from the middle of July with 30+ seen over the Education Pond on 17th (PM/BM). A similar number flew over the Coppice on 12th August (PM/BM). Numbers at the feeders in the Sensory Garden built up from the end of August with 24 on 11th September (GJB), 26 on 13th September (PM/BM), 31 on 15th September (PM/BM) and 30 on 22nd September (DAN et al) the highest counts and including many juveniles. Numbers dropped again in October with no more than 12 reported. A few birds continued to visit the feeders in the Sensory Garden to the end of the year but the highest counts in December were elsewhere. Twenty were feeding on seed heads near the new ponds by the Manager's Garden on 3rd (PM/BM) and 21 were there the next day (PA).

**Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* **Infrequent Visitor**

This is very much a winter visitor to the reserve with birds coming to feed on alder seed in roadside trees by the Lagoon. Sightings were reported on seven dates this year but birds probably often go unnoticed high up in the branches. There were sightings on four

dates between 1st and 12th January with nine birds on 4th the highest number reported. There were no other records of more than three birds. One was seen on 9th February and three on 20th February. On 24th April there was a rare sighting of two males and a female in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC). There were no records in the latter part of the year.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina* **Casual Breeder**

Numbers on Tim's Field in February 2012 reached a record breaking 597 birds. They did get up to 105 on 15th January this year (JB) but this was to be the highest count in the first few months of the year. Flocks were seen daily throughout January, February, March and April and counts of up to 60 were still being reported up to 5th May. Numbers fell away rapidly after this date and two birds on the compound banking on 17th May was the last sighting of the spring. There were no further records until 11th August when a male was seen on the compound fence (PM). Four bird on overhead wires near the radio mast on 18th August almost certainly included juveniles (PM) so it appears likely one pair may have bred on the reserve, as was the case last year. A small flock of around 26 was present from 13th October and there were daily sightings thereafter, though no observers reported more than 56. Birds often assembled in the trees at the Manager's Garden and in the poplars in the latter part of the year with up to 50 counted here but numbers fell away somewhat in the last two weeks of December with no more than 25 birds reported.

**Lesser Redpoll** *Carduelis cabaret* **Infrequent Visitor**

There were five records this year, one more than last year. One was seen in the Manager's Garden on 9th January (JH); one was in roadside alders on 12th January (PC); one was seen by the Lagoon on 9th February (DC/EC); one was again seen in roadside trees on 20th February (PA) and one was reported on the river path on 17th March (PA).

**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* **Resident Breeder**

This species is now doing very well locally. Like last year there were daily sightings from the beginning of the year to the end of August with just a handful of records in September. However, unlike last year October too was very quiet with just two records of a single bird. Where do they disappear to? The majority of records again came

from three sites - the Manager's Garden, the Sensory Garden and the Willow Path/Coppice. There were some impressive counts with some of the highest in January. Ten were seen on the Willow Path on 13th January (PC); six males and six females were seen during an early morning WeBS visit on the same date; nine males were reported on a walk round the reserve on 16th January including six on the Willow Path (DC/EC) and nine birds were seen again on 20th January - five at the feeders on the Willow Path and four in the Sensory Garden (GP). A walk round the reserve on 27th January produced five males and four females (DC/EC). There were regular reports of five and six birds at the feeders in the Sensory Garden. The first and only juvenile was reported in the Manager's Garden on 29th June (DC/EC). Activity increased considerably in November with birds visiting the feeders on the Willow Path, in the Manager's Garden and Sensory Garden daily. On 17th December four males and two females were at the seed feeder on the Willow Path opposite the ramp to the Duck Marsh Hide (PM/BM) and on 22nd December four males and two females were reported at the feeders in the Manager's Garden (DC/EC). Four males were also seen at the edge of the Sludge lagoon on 15th and in the Sensory Garden on 28th December (DC/EC).

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citronella* **Scarce Visitor**

This is still a scarce bird in the area and there were again no sightings this year. In 2010 there were three February records and in 2011 one February record and one March record - all in the Manager's Garden.

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus* **Resident Breeder**

Numbers visiting the feeders in the Manager's Garden in the early part of the year were similar to last year with up to eight in January, seven in February and six in March, but again much lower than in 2011 when up to 18 were reported with double figure counts most days. Birds were also regular visitors to the feeders in the Sensory Garden where up to four were seen. There were still daily visits to the feeders in both gardens throughout April with up to seven reported in the Manager's Garden and four in the Sensory Garden. Numbers started to fall away in May but there were still a few birds most days right up to the end of June. Singing males were reported on all four wetland areas from the end of May and, like last year, at least one pair again nested in long vegetation at the Dragonfly Ponds, though

there were no reports of juveniles. Birds were typically hard to find in September but a few started to visit the feeders in the Manager's Garden again from the middle of October. Four or five could be seen there most days in November and December but there was just one double figure count - 10 on 15th December (DAN et al). Six were recorded on several dates in the last week of December. Birds were also daily visitors to the feeders in the Sensory Garden in November and December but with usually just one or two seen.

## **ESCAPED SPECIES SEEN THIS YEAR**

### **Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* Escaped Species**

One that flew over the Lagoon on 2nd July 2011 was the first sighting since 2005. Last year a single bird was on the Lagoon on three dates in April and one date in May. This year what was almost certainly the same bird arrived on the Lagoon on 14th September and promptly started to pursue the resident mute swans in an aggressive manner. Things calmed down after a day or two and the bird remained on site until 6th November, alternating between the Lagoon and Duck Marsh. It returned for a day on 17th November but was then seen on the canal on several occasions between 18th November and 7th December. On 11th December it returned to the Lagoon and was then present daily to the end of the year.

### **Other species that have been recorded on the reserve in previous years:**

Bar-headed Goose (Escape)  
Corn Bunting  
Grey Phalarope  
Marbled Duck (Probable escape)  
Red-crested Pochard (Probable escape)  
Ringed Teal (Escape)  
Rose-ringed Parakeet (Escape)  
Sandwich Tern  
Scaup  
Short-eared Owl  
Twite

**FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR WINTER VISITORS**  
**2013**

| <b>SPECIES</b> | <b>LAST</b>  | <b>FIRST</b>  |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Wigeon         | 13th April * | 7th September |
| Goldeneye      | 24th April   | -             |
| Waxwing        | 21st April   | -             |
| Fieldfare      | 14th April   | 16th October  |
| Redwing        | 14th April   | 13th October  |
| Brambling      | 17th March   | -             |

\* A single female was also seen on six dates between 29th May and 24th July with two birds on one date, well beyond the date when wild birds would have returned to their breeding grounds.

**FIRST AND LAST DATES FOR SUMMER VISITORS**  
**2013**

| SPECIES                | FIRST      | LAST           |
|------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Garganey               | -          | -              |
| Hobby                  | -          | -              |
| Honey Buzzard          | -          | -              |
| Osprey                 | -          | -              |
| Ringed Plover          | -          | -              |
| Little (Ringed) Plover | 16th April | 5th June       |
| Whimbrel               | -          | -              |
| Common Sandpiper       | 10th April | 4th October    |
| Common Tern            | 28th April | 13th July      |
| Arctic Tern            | -          | -              |
| Cuckoo                 | -          | -              |
| Swift                  | 27th April | 13th August    |
| Sand Martin            | 13th April | 13th August    |
| Swallow                | 12th April | 25th September |
| House Martin           | 14th April | 22nd September |
| Yellow Wagtail         | -          | -              |
| Whinchat               | 15th April | 14th September |
| Wheatear               | -          | -              |
| Grasshopper Warbler    | 24th April | 20th July      |
| Sedge Warbler          | 22nd April | 26th August    |
| Reed Warbler           | 24th April | 25th August    |
| Garden Warbler         | 12th May   | 11th September |
| Common Whitethroat     | 20th April | 11th September |
| Lesser Whitethroat     | 28th April | 4th September  |
| Willow Warbler         | 15th April | 22nd September |
| Spotted Flycatcher     | -          | -              |
| Common Redstart        | -          | -              |

In view of the number of Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs now overwintering in the area it is not possible to give accurate arrival and departure dates for actual migrants.

## MAMMALS



### **Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

The snowy conditions in January provided an excellent opportunity to see how much mammal activity there was on the reserve during the night. Fox tracks were everywhere criss-crossing the whole area. There was also a good deal of daytime activity though the month started on a sad note when "Stumpy", the big male fox with the very short tail, was found dead in the Lagoon on 9th. Stumpy had been a regular feature on the reserve for almost five years. On 15th a fox was seen carrying a male pheasant in the Coppice (JB). There was almost constant activity on 22nd with three different foxes being seen on several occasions, including two together on the John Ackroyd Meadow (PM/BM). Two were also seen on the Mike Fisk Meadow on 2nd March (PC). There was also a lot of activity in April. A beautifully conditioned animal was seen on the scrubland on several evenings, there were sightings on the meadows and five cubs were filmed on a camera trap at a new den site. On 18th May a vixen and two cubs were seen on the meadows (DC/EC) and on 6th June three cubs were watched for some time in the same area (RF et al). A very handsome male was seen by the Sludge Lagoon fence on 17th June (PM/BM et al). A juvenile with mange, seen in the car park on 15th July, was found dead by the Lagoon on 18th July. Three foxes were seen during an early morning WeBS visit on 21st July (DAN et al). On 13th August an adult was seen on the Willow Path during the evening and a juvenile appeared further along the path in front of the adult, each seemingly oblivious of the other (PM/BM). One was reported on the bridge on 28th September but there were then no further sightings until 1st December when one was seen on the far riverbank near the weir (AP), though there was regular evidence of their presence. There was another sighting on the riverbank on 28th December (PA).

### **Otter** *Lutra lutra*

There was ample evidence of the presence of otters this year and, as suspected, the area round the new Fish Pass proved to be one of the

best places to look for tracks and signs. There was also a rare daylight sighting here on 14th February when staff from Yorkshire Water and the civil engineers watched and photographed an otter swimming across the pass. The identification was confirmed the following day from tracks found in the area. Prior to this sighting fresh tracks had been found in snow by the river bridge on 4th February (JK). There was a lot of activity from the beginning of March to the middle of May. Two sets of fresh tracks were found under the river bridge on 4th March (JB) and further fresh tracks were reported there on 8th March (JK). On the 8th March tracks were also found on a sandbank above the weir. On 15th March one was photographed on a camera trap on the riverbank at 8.05pm and 1.00am the following morning. On 23rd March one was again caught on camera in the same area at 2.35am. The same area produced further photographs at 6.55pm on 27th March and 3.00am on 30th March in very cold conditions. In April and the first few days of May fresh tracks and spraint were found on several dates in the area of the Fish Pass. Otters cover large areas in their travels and often disappear for weeks on end. This was the case from the middle of May to the beginning of September. Throughout much of September there was again a lot of activity around the Fish Pass with fresh tracks and spraint found regularly. With river levels high throughout much of October and the first half of November evidence of their presence was hard to find but, with levels down for a few days from the middle of November, fresh spraint was again found on exposed rocks by the Fish Pass.



**American Mink *Neovison vison***

This "introduced" species is now a major problem for other wildlife along the river and on the reserve. There was activity throughout much of the year but reaching a peak in the period from early June to the end of August. Among the many records this year these are just a few. Fresh tracks were found in wet mud on the riverbank under the bridge on 7th January and on 29th January a large mink was reported on the bottom island on the Lagoon. Examination of an artificial otter holt on this island the same day



revealed evidence of mink in residence and two freshly killed Coot (JB). On 11th March a large, very dark animal was caught on a camera trap on the riverbank and one was again seen in the same area on 19th March (JB). On 8th June one was seen on the Fish Pass by a large number of visitors during a guided walk. This animal was initially thought to be carrying a mole but this was subsequently realised to be a juvenile mink. On 11th June one was seen carrying prey onto the weir. On 30th June a visitor reported one killing a duck in front of the Lagoon Hide and taking it to the middle island. On the same date all four, or possibly five, tern nests on the Lagoon were predated by mink. A mink was seen being pursued by two terns as it swam across the Lagoon the next day (JB/MB et al). This or another animal became particularly bold on 3rd July, running up the ramp at the Mike Sheldon Hide (DC/EC). Later the same day one was watched carrying a fish from the Duck Marsh to the Lagoon (RB). There were sightings most days thereafter to the end of the month. On 17th July an adult with three juveniles was seen with a large fish at the Education Pond (KL/PL). Activity continued throughout August with sightings on the Lagoon and Wet Grassland. Two were also seen on the river path on 31st August (PA). On 7th September one was seen with a dead coot near the Lagoon Hide (PA) and on 16th September one was reported at the Education Pond (BH). There were no sightings after this date but evidence in the form of footprints continued to be found in wet mud on the riverbank near the bridge.

### **Weasel** *Mustela nivalis*

There were just 36 reported sightings this year, 14 less than last year, but many sightings almost certainly went unreported as this remains a common mammal on the reserve. There were sightings in all months except June. Among the more interesting records, one was seen carrying a vole on the pavings outside the Visitor Centre patio doors on 3rd February (JB/MB et al) and on 18th February one was seen carrying a frog at the Dragonfly Ponds (BB). On 8th April one was watched for some time in the Sensory Garden before it caught a vole (PM/BM). On 28th September one was again seen just outside the patio doors carrying a small rodent (JC). Most sightings involved single animals but two were seen on the road by the Visitor Centre on 18th July (JB/MB) and four reported on the path to the Manager's Garden on 22nd August almost certainly included



juveniles (SHe). As always, the most reliable place for sightings was around the Visitor Centre.

**Stoat** *Mustela erminea*

This species is much less common on the reserve than its smaller relative, the weasel. There were confirmed sightings on just two dates again this year. On 1st February one was seen crossing the road near the "Mammal Hotel" and on 4th February there was a further sighting near the Visitor Centre (JK). There was also an unconfirmed sighting of two near the Dipping Ponds on 6th April.

**Roe Deer** *Capreolus capreolus*

This remains a common mammal along the valley. Sightings were reported on 70 dates, 14 more than last year and in all months. As with foxes, tracks were everywhere in the snow in January, including right outside the Visitor Centre. Most records were of between one and three animals but four were on the Wet Grassland on 12th January (JC); possibly the same four were on the Duck Marsh the next day (DC/EC); five were on the Duck Marsh on 3rd February (ST); six were there on 16th February (PC/PS) and five seen crossing the road and on the farmland on 11th March included four bucks (JK). Four bucks and a doe were seen later the same day behind the Reedbed (PM/BM). April was another busy month with numerous sightings. Five were on the farmland on 7th (DC/EC); six were seen crossing the farmland on 14th and four bucks were on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 15th (JB). A heavily pregnant female was seen on the Duck Marsh on 15th May (JH) and on 19th May what was presumably the same animal was seen with a fawn in the same area (DC/EC). The female and fawn were seen again on 12th June (PA/AB) and 23rd June (DAN et al). Activity died down considerably from the beginning of July with just a handful of sightings between then and the middle of October, though with vegetation then at its highest this was perhaps hardly surprising. A buck and three females were on the Duck Marsh on 23rd October (DC/EC) but other autumn sightings were of just one or two animals. There was rather more activity again in December with sightings on the Lagoon, Duck Marsh, Mike Fisk Meadow and Tim's Field with four seen here on 22nd (DC/EC).



**Mole** *Talpa europaea*

There was again ample evidence of the presence of this small mammal throughout the year in the form of mole hills all round the reserve. In June and July there were large numbers of mole hills on the freshly ploughed Tim's Field. With few hard frosts moles were active right to the end of the year with regular evidence on the Willow Path and at the Dragonfly Ponds. One was found dead between the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge and the Sludge lagoon on 7th July (JB/MB).

**Common Shrew** *Sorex araneus*

Almost certainly much more common on the reserve than the few records suggest. Dead shrews tend to turn up on paths round the reserve most years but only one was reported this time - one was found by the river seat on 23rd June during a WeBS visit. Only one was caught in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys this year - on the river path on 7th August. On 20th December one was disturbed at the Dragonfly Ponds (RS).



**Water Shrew** *Neomys fodiens*

Survey work carried out in 2004, 2005 and 2009 using bait tubes showed that this species was present within the Reedbed area of the reserve - but there had been no sightings of this elusive little mammal prior to 2009 when one was found dead on the back Reedbed and there was an unconfirmed sighting of one at the edge of the Lagoon on the same date. In 2010 what was described as an especially fine specimen was caught in a Longworth trap in the Reedbed during a small mammal survey run by the Yorkshire Mammal Group on 17th July. There were no records in 2011 but in 2012 there was one sighting of an individual at the edge of the Lagoon on 15th June. There were no records this year.

**House Mouse** *Mus musculus*

There were again no records this year. Mice found in the workshop or seed store invariably turn out to be wood mice.

**Wood Mouse** *Apodemus sylvaticus*

This is a common mammal on the reserve, a number being caught in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys - see separate survey

report for details. Several nest boxes were found to have wood mice in residence during the autumn survey but there were no other reported sightings this year until 20th December when three were disturbed under a piece of liner at the Dragonfly Ponds (RS).

**Bank Vole** *Clethrionomys glareolus*

This is a very common mammal on the reserve most years. There were regular sightings under the feeders in the Manager's Garden from the beginning of March to the end of October but very few sightings under the Sensory Garden feeders this year. Among the more unusual sightings, one was caught by a magpie on the road on 23rd March (JB/MB). It was again the commonest small mammal caught in Longworth traps during small mammal surveys - see separate survey report for details.

**Field or Short-tailed Vole** *Microtus agrestis*

This species is rarely caught in Longworth traps so it is difficult to assess how common it really is on the reserve. However, it is probably the main prey item for the resident kestrels. There were no records this year.

**Brown Rat** *Rattus norvegicus*

Although this species is normally surprisingly uncommon on the reserve there was a spate of sightings in the Manager's Garden for a time in November last year. However, it was back to normal this year with just one seen on the river path on 28th April (JB).

**Grey Squirrel** *Sciurus carolinensis*

A visitor from nearby woodland, there were sightings on nine dates in the period from 7th January to 4th May, just one of these involving two animals. There were no further records until 6th August when one was seen on the river bridge. Single animals were recorded on a further seven dates in the next two months. Two were seen on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 6th November (DC/EC) and from 20th November to 25th December there was a series of sightings on the entry road and in the Manager's Garden with one on the Willow Path - all involving single animals.

**Rabbit** *Oryctogalus cuniculus*

This has always been a scarce mammal on the reserve and there have been no sightings since 28th October 2011.

**Hedgehog** *Erinaceus europaeus*

There have been no reported sightings in the last five years. One on the bridge on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2008 was, amazingly, only the second ever record for the reserve.

**Pipistrelle Bat** *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

The commonest bat on the reserve, it was recorded in very good numbers during the first of the two organised Bat Nights on 20th July but numbers were somewhat lower during the second Bat Night on 10th August, despite similar weather conditions. The best site on the reserve for encountering this species appears to be the area around the Duck Marsh Hide where they can be present in very good numbers after dark. This species is also regularly seen around the Visitor Centre on summer evenings.

**Noctule Bat** *Nyctalus noctula*

Emerging rather earlier than the pipistrelle, a few were seen over the wetlands and Tim's Field during the two Bat Nights on 20th July and 10th August. Several larger bats seen low over the Reedbed on 24th September (PC/PG) were probably this species.

**Daubenton's Bat** *Myotis daubentoni*

This species was first recorded in 2006 and then again in 2007. There have been no records in the last six years but the species is almost certainly still present.

We are grateful to Diane Gregory for again leading two very enjoyable bat walks this year.

## SMALL MAMMAL SURVEYS

Several surveys were again carried out this year using Longworth live traps. The results are shown below.

### **Date of Survey: 8th June 2013 (Public Event)**

26 Longworth traps set in three different habitats.

1/ Path to Manager's Garden/Dry stone wall - 8 traps - 6 successful

|           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| Woodmouse | 1 ♂ |
| Woodmouse | 1 ♀ |
| Bank Vole | 3 ♂ |
| Bank Vole | 1 ♀ |

2/ Willow Path - 12 traps - 11 successful

|           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| Woodmouse | 4 ♂ |
| Woodmouse | 1 ♀ |
| Bank Vole | 4 ♂ |
| Bank Vole | 2 ♀ |

3/ Sensory Garden - 6 traps - 3 successful

|           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| Bank Vole | 2 ♂     |
| Bank Vole | 1 ♀ juv |

### **Date of Survey: 3rd August 2013**

26 Longworth traps set in two different habitats

1/ Path to Manager's Garden/ Dry stone wall - 9 traps - 3 successful

|           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| Bank Vole | 2 ♂ |
| Bank Vole | 1 ♀ |

2/ Willow Path - 17 traps - 14 successful

|           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Woodmouse | 2♂ |
| Woodmouse | 4♀ |
| Bank Vole | 5♂ |
| Bank Vole | 3♀ |

**Date of Survey: 7th August 2013**

26 Longworth traps set in three different habitats

1/ Bentley's Path - 8 traps - 2 successful

|           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Woodmouse | 2♂ |
|-----------|----|

2/ River Path - 9 traps - 3 successful

|              |    |
|--------------|----|
| Woodmouse    | 1♂ |
| Woodmouse    | 1♀ |
| Common Shrew | 1♀ |

3/ Dragonfly Ponds - 9 traps - 0 successful

**Date of Survey: 26th October 2013 (Public Event)**

26 Longworth traps set - all on the Willow Path - 23 successful

|           |    |
|-----------|----|
| Woodmouse | 7♂ |
| Woodmouse | 2♀ |
| Bank Vole | 8♂ |
| Bank Vole | 6♀ |

## **Harvest Mouse Introduction Programme**

Many visitors to the reserve in 2013 have enjoyed their first ever glimpse of a harvest mouse, albeit in a large glass tank in the Visitor Centre. The tank is one of a series being used to breed young mice for subsequent release here in 2014. The reserve appears to offer ideal habitat for harvest mice with tall grasses, reedbeds and grassy hedgerows though an extensive survey towards the end of 2012 suggested they were not currently present.

The introduction programme will require the gradual release of 300 young mice throughout the spring and summer months of 2014. The winter survival rate can be as low as 5% which, together with natural predation, would suggest that success is not guaranteed. Harvest mice can live for 18 months in the wild but the average is just six months. However, they reach maturity in six weeks and can produce up to seven litters a year of between three to eight young though the normal number of litters is three. In the wild the mating season is from May to October.

Harvest mice are tiny compared with wood mice. They weigh less than a 2p coin when fully grown with a body length of 50 to 80mm plus a tail of between 50 to 70mm. They are both diurnal and nocturnal and are excellent climbers in reeds and grasses where they construct breeding nests from woven grasses in the stems well off the ground.

The breeding programme is complex and requires a great deal of time and patience. We are grateful to Maxine and John Brook for taking on this huge task. To avoid inbreeding mice have to be identified and separated on a regular basis and one mouse does tend to look a bit like another! To ensure a good gene pool mice are now being exchanged with Pudsey Park Visitor Centre and Askham Bryan College. Lotherton Hall are also looking after some stock for us. We are grateful to these concerns for their help and support with this project. We are also grateful to Jon Traill and to Yorkshire Wildlife Trust at Potteric Carr for providing the original breeding stock and to Yorkshire Mammal Group for their help with the initial survey.

## **AMPHIBIANS**

### **Smooth Newt** *Triturus vulgaris*

A common species on the reserve and particularly easy to see at the Dragonfly Ponds in the spring. One seen in Scarborough Pond on 14th April was the first of the year, more than three weeks later than last year thanks to the cold spring. There were sightings in the Long Ditch, Pebble Beach Pond and Chadwick Pond subsequently. There were also several reports of smooth newts in the mini-beast trap at the Manager's Garden from 11th May.

### **Palmate Newt**

Present in very small numbers, this species was first recorded on 12th May 2010 when a male was found in one of the Dragonfly Ponds. In 2011 two females were recorded during surveys in May. There were no records in 2012 or 2013.

### **Common Frog** *Rana temporaria*

Present in good numbers in the Dragonfly Ponds during the breeding season and in the ditches on the Wet Grassland. The first spawn was reported at the ponds on 9th March (JH), six days later than last year. By 17th March almost all the ponds contained spawn. On the same date the remains of several large frogs were found at the edge of Woodhead Pond but who the predator was remains a mystery. Although herons do regularly visit the ponds for amphibians this particular attack did not bear their hallmark. Young frogs were present in good numbers on various paths from 21st June.

### **Common Toad** *Bufo bufo*

A mating pair on the riverside path on 16th March was the first record of the year (DC/EC), five days later than last year. Several were observed mating in the Pebble Beach Pond on 14th April and on 15th April 194 were counted at the ponds during a survey (PJM). The most popular sites were Co-op Pond with 46 and the Long Ditch with 68. Several were also noted at the Dipping Ponds on the same date. The first spawn was seen in the Long Ditch on 19th April (PM/BM) and by the following day spawn had been laid in several ponds. There were numerous reports of adults during the summer months, the mini-beast trap by the Manager's Garden being a popular refuge. One on

the Willow Path on 13th October was the last reported sighting of the year (DC/EC).

## **REPTILES**

### **Red-eared Terrapin** *Trachemys scripta elegans*

Native to the southern United States and northern Mexico, this species is a popular pet in this country and, unfortunately, is often released into the wild. It now figures on the list of the world's 100 most invasive species. Disappointingly, there were two records this year. One, approximately seven inches long, was caught on a raft on the Back Reedbed on 15th April (JB/MB) and in early July another was seen on the same raft (PM/BM).

## **BUTTERFLIES**

Having had the best summer for a number of years it is easy to forget that the spring was pretty forgettable and butterflies were distinctly thin on the ground. Bitterly cold easterly winds and snow were the main features in March and, as a result, overwintered Small Tortoiseshells, Peacocks and Commas failed to put in an appearance. April too started on a cold note with easterly winds and frosts most nights. The wind did finally move out of the east and a rise in temperature brought out decent numbers of Small Tortoiseshells and a few Peacocks in the more sheltered areas around the middle of the month, despite strong to gale force westerlies. Much of May was also unsettled with strong winds, rain and daytime temperatures struggling to reach 10° centigrade at times. It turned out to be the coldest spring since 1979.

Orange Tips failed to put in an appearance until 26th April and while May produced plenty of sightings numbers were rather lower than last year. By Rodley standards Brimstones had a decent year with sightings on five dates between 20th May and 26th June but despite a lot of Alder Buckthorn on the Butterfly Bank now there was no evidence of breeding.

Tim's Field is always the best place to see white butterflies in numbers in July and August and this year was no exception. A wonderful crop of Fodder Radish in flower and warm sunny days produced some excellent counts of Small Whites with several hundred there some days towards the end of July and into August. Green-veined Whites were disappointing both as regards numbers of sightings and numbers of butterflies.

After its best year ever in 2012 hopes were high that Small Coppers would have another good year but it was not to be with numbers well down. Blue butterflies had another poor year and the Common Blue is still just hanging on with just one confirmed sighting on 23rd June. There was also only one record of Holly Blue.

Among the immigrants Red Admirals were disappointing with only a dozen or so reported sightings and no more than two butterflies seen. Painted Ladies had another poor year with just a brief flurry of activity

on buddleias outside the Visitor Centre between 25th and 28th August and up to three butterflies seen.

As regards the Satyridae, Speckled Wood was the third most frequently reported butterfly this year and counts from August were somewhat higher than in recent years. The number of sightings of Gatekeepers was encouraging but numbers remain very low with no more than three reported. Meadow Browns had a better year with one count of 50+ on 12th July. Ringlets too had a reasonable year, again with a 50+ count on the same day (a very hot one).

The Small Skipper enjoyed one of its better years in 2012 despite the poor summer and the improvement was continued this year with a good number of sightings reported. Large Skippers too did reasonably well in 2012 but the number of sightings this year was very meagre.

However, the real highlight this year was the summer emergence of Small Tortoiseshells (the most frequently reported butterfly this year) and, to a lesser extent, Peacocks. Creeping Thistle was the big attraction for the freshly emerged Small Tortoiseshells in July with plenty of double figure counts and a reserve count of 65 on 22nd July. Buddleias by the Visitor Centre attracted good numbers of Peacocks in August and the white buddleia on the Butterfly Bank produced a count of circa 30 on 7th August. The summer emergence of Commas was very much in line with last year.

Overall it was a reasonably good year but some species are still only present in very low numbers and we have a long way to go despite the improvements already made to the habitat at Rodley.

## **HESPERIDAE**

### **Small Skipper** (*Thymelicus sylvestris*)

Despite the poor summer this species was well recorded last year, albeit in small numbers. The improvement was continued this year with a good number of records submitted. One on the river path on 26th June was the first of the year (DC/EC/JS), nine days earlier than

last year. The river path proved to be the most productive area followed by the John Ackroyd Meadow. However, the best count of 10 butterflies was on the far bank of the Lagoon on 12th July during a butterfly survey (PM/BM). One on the Butterfly Bank on 28th July was the last of the year (PM/BM), nearly four weeks earlier than last year.

### **Large Skipper** (*Ochlodes venatus*)

Almost certainly under-recorded, there were far fewer sightings reported than last year. Three on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 26th June were the first of the year (JS/JH), eight days earlier than last year. One at the edge of the Lagoon on 15th July was the last (PM/BM), more than two weeks earlier than last year.

## **PIERIDAE**

### **Brimstone** (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)

This has always been a scarce butterfly on the reserve so sightings on five dates this year has to rate as a reasonable year. Single butterflies were seen on the Butterfly Bank on 20th May (JB), on the entry road on 25th May (JH), at the edge of the Coppice on 19th June (DC/EC), in the same area again on 25th June (WNS) and in the Sensory Garden on 26th June (TRC et al). All sightings are thought to have been of males.

### **Large White** (*Pieris brassicae*)

There were twice as many records as last year. One on Tim's Field on 5th May was the first of the spring (MW), three days later than last year. Numbers were low with no observers reporting more than four. One at the edge of Tim's Field on 26th August looked like being the last sighting of the year but there was a late record on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 5th October (DC/EC). This was four days later than the last record in 2012.

### **Small White** (*Artogeia rapae*)

This was the second most frequently reported butterfly on the reserve this year. The highest counts are always on Tim's Field but numbers this year were exceptional thanks to an abundant flowering of Fodder Radish. Last year the first record came on 27th March but this year we had to wait until 5th May for the first sighting in the Manager's

Garden (DC/EC). Numbers on Tim's Field typically started to build in July with several hundred there towards the end of the month and good numbers elsewhere on the reserve. Numbers on Tim's Field fell to around 20 in the first half of September. Seven reported on 6th October looked like being the last of the year but a rare beautiful warm, sunny day on 24th October produced one on Tim's Field and one on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). The last record in 2012 was on 29th September.

**Green-veined White** (*Artogeia napi*)

It was another disappointing year both as regards numbers of sightings and numbers of butterflies reported. Four on 19th May were the first of the year (JS), more than three weeks later than last year. Four, in fact, turned out to be the highest count of the year with all subsequent records being of three butterflies or less. One on Tim's Field on 31st August was the last sighting of the year (DC/EC), six days earlier than last year.

**Orange Tip** (*Anthocharis cardamines*)

It was an excellent year as regards the number of sightings reported but numbers of butterflies, surprisingly, were lower than last year. It was a slow start, thanks to a cold April, and there were no sightings until 26th April when a male was seen near the Dipping Ponds (DAN). May, however, produced plenty of records all round the reserve with the Butterfly Bank and the Willow Path being particularly productive. June too produced plenty of records and a single male on Bentley's Path on 21st June was the last of the year (PM/BM), nine days later than last year.

## LYCAENIDAE

**White-letter Hairstreak** (*Satyrrium w-album*)

There were no sightings this year. There has been just one record on the reserve - in the Sensory Garden on 19th July 2006.

**Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*)

Despite the excellent summer this year was somewhat disappointing for this species after what was probably the best year ever in 2012. Two on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 8th June were the first of the

year (RS), more than five weeks later than last year. There were no further sightings until 8th July when one was seen on Ragwort on the John Ackroyd Meadow (JK). We then had to wait until 1st August for the next sighting when one was seen between the Wet Grassland and the Reedbed (PM/BM). There were sightings on six further dates in August with three on 27th the best count of the year, two of these on one of the rides in the Coppice (PM/BM). There were then reports of single butterflies on three dates in September - on the John Ackroyd Meadow, at the edge of Tim's Field and by the Fish Pass. One on the river path on 6th October was the last of the year (DC/EC), three days later than last year. 2012 produced a count of 13 on 28th August, the highest number reported on the reserve to date.

### **Common Blue** (*Polyommatus icarus*)

The last four years have each produced just one reported sighting of this species and it was to be the same again this year. A single butterfly was recorded on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 23rd June (DC/EC).

### **Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*)

This is a scarce butterfly on the reserve, the last four years having produced just four records. There was just one reported sighting this year - a single insect on buddleias by the compound on 7th August (PL/ML/JS).

## **NYMPHALIDAE**

### **Red Admiral**

Despite the excellent summer it was a disappointing year for this annual immigrant from the Mediterranean. There was an unconfirmed report of one on the Willow Path on 19th May but we had to wait until 7th July for the next sighting of one at the Dragonfly Ponds (JH). There were sightings of single butterflies on three further dates in July, two of these on buddleias outside the Visitor Centre (DC/EC). The same buddleias produced two on 1st August (PM/BM) and there were sightings of single butterflies on four further dates in August. September was very disappointing with just one sighting in the Manager's Garden on 29th. One on Tim's Field on 20th October looked like being the last of the year but there were two very late

records of single butterflies by the Visitor Centre on 4th November (PM/BM) and near the Manager's Garden on 10th November (JH) - the last on a very cold but sunny day with temperatures no higher than 6°C.

### **Painted Lady** (*Vanessa cardui*)

It was another disappointing year for this immigrant species. Three were on buddleias on the Butterfly Bank on 25th August (PM/BM et al). There were then sightings of one or two butterflies in the same area over the next three days but none after 28th August.

### **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*)

This was again the most frequently reported butterfly by a considerable margin. There was an exceptionally early sighting of one on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 16th February (JH) but there were no further records until 5th April when one was disturbed on the Scrubland (PM/BM). On 10th April two were observed mating on the compost heap by the radio mast (LJ et al). The best counts of the spring were nine on 15th April (PM/BM), eight on 6th May, five of these on the Scrubland (JB/MB), 11 around the reserve on the same date (PL/ML), 12 on 31st May and eight on 3rd June (PM/BM). Two were observed mating on Bentley's Path on 15th June. Overwintered butterflies continued to be seen until 8th July but were looking extremely worn by then. The first freshly emerged butterfly was seen on the same date on Field Scabious in the Sensory Garden (PM/BM). Numbers built up rapidly and on 15th July 16 fresh butterflies were counted, nine of these on Creeping Thistle on the path to the Fish Pass. On 22nd July 65 were counted, 32 of these on the same Creeping Thistle (PM/BM). The same area continued to provide double figure counts to the end of the month. Large numbers of small caterpillars were found on nettles behind the old Dipping Pond on 7th August (DC/EC). Numbers of butterflies tailed off considerably from early August and there were no sightings at all after 8th August until 26th August. There were a few reports after this date but only of single butterflies. One near the Manager's Garden on 24th October was the last of the year (PM/BM). In 2012 there was a very late record on 11th November in very mild conditions.

**Peacock (*Aglais io*)**

This species hibernates over the winter and usually emerges in March or April. One on the river path on 6th April was the first of the spring (JS/PA), nearly two weeks later than last year. Numbers were low with no observers reporting more than four butterflies until 22nd May when five were seen on the Butterfly Bank (MC). The last overwintered butterfly was reported in the Manager's Garden on 26th June. The first freshly emerged butterfly was seen at the Fish Pass on 8th July (JB). Large numbers of caterpillars were reported on nettles near the Reedbed Hide on 13th July. Freshly emerged butterflies started to appear daily from 26th July. Buddleias outside the Visitor Centre attracted up to five on 1st August and on 7th August around 30 were on the white buddleia on the Butterfly Bank (PM/JB). The buddleia by the compound gates attracted up to 10 on the same day (PM/BM). Numbers fell away sharply from the end of August and the best count in September was just two. October looked like being a blank, thanks to the weather, but a beautiful, warm, sunny day on 24th produced one on the Butterfly Bank (PM/BM). The last record in 2012 was just three days earlier. There was, however, a very late record of one fluttering about in the Manager's Garden Hide on 1st December (JH), almost certainly disturbed during hibernation.

**Comma (*Polygonum c-album*)**

This is another species that hibernates over the winter months and usually emerges from early March onwards but thanks to a particularly cold spring there were no sightings until 19th May this year when one was seen at the Dragonfly Ponds (JS). Last year the first record was on 11th March. There was just one June record - a single butterfly in the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge on 7th (PM/BM). We then had to wait until 14th July for the first freshly emerged butterflies with three reported on 15th July. Numbers generally were very much in line with last year when the summer was much wetter. There were sightings on just two dates in what was a wet and windy October, two on 24th - a rare beautiful, warm, sunny day - being the last of the year - one feeding on Alder Buckthorn berries on the Butterfly Bank and one in the hedgerow at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM). The last sighting in 2012 was just three days earlier.

## SATYRIDAE

### **Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria*)

This was the third most frequently recorded butterfly this year. Numbers in the first half of the year were very similar to the last two years with no more than two reported. One in the Coppice on 17th May was the first of the spring (JK), 12 days later than last year. However, counts from August were somewhat higher than in recent years. Eight freshly emerged butterflies were at the edge of the Lagoon and on the Butterfly Bank on 9th August (PM/BM). Eight were again reported on 12th August - on the Willow Path, in the Coppice and at the edge of the Lagoon. Five on the Willow Path on 19th August included a mating pair. Six were at the edge of the Lagoon on 9th September but the best count of the year came on 16th September with at least 15 in the shelter of the Coppice during a very windy day (PM/BM). One near the Visitor Centre on 28th September was the last of the year (DC/EC), nine days earlier than last year.

### **Wall Brown** (*Lasiommata megera*)

This species has suffered a drastic decline in the Leeds area in recent times and there had been only one sighting on the reserve in the previous five years - a single butterfly on the river path on 5th September last year. There were no reported sightings this year.

### **Gatekeeper** (*Pyronia tithonus*)

Despite plenty of sightings this year numbers remain low with no observers reporting more than three butterflies. One on Bentley's Path on 14th July was the first of the year (PL/ML), 11 days earlier than last year. The most reliable sites were the Butterfly Bank and Willow Path. A single female on the Butterfly Bank on 23rd August was the last of the year.

### **Meadow Brown** (*Maniola jurtina*)

After three fairly poor years there was at last some improvement this year. There were no sightings in 2012 until 4th July but June did produce a handful of records this time with two near the Visitor Centre on 6th the first of the year (JB/MB). A very warm, sunny day on 12th July produced a count of 50+ which proved to be the highest of the year (PM/BM). The two meadows were the best sites with circa

40 there on 17th July (PM/BM). One on the Butterfly Bank on 27th August was the last of the year (PM/BM), nearly two weeks earlier than last year.

**Ringlet** (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

During its short flight period this is one of the most numerous butterflies on the reserve. A single butterfly by the John Ackroyd Meadow hedge on 26th June was the first of the year (JB), five days earlier than last year. The John Ackroyd Meadow was in fact the most productive area on the reserve with the Lagoon margins also holding good numbers. A walk round the reserve on a very hot day on 12th July produced a count of more than 50 butterflies (PM/BM), the highest of the year. One on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 3rd August was the last of the year (DC/EC), six days earlier than last year.

**Small Heath** (*Coenonympha pamphilus*)

First recorded on the reserve in 2005, there have been no confirmed sightings since then.

## **BUTTERFLIES**

### **First and Last Dates - 2013**

| <b>Species</b>          | <b>First date</b> | <b>Last date</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Small Skipper           | 26th June         | 28th July        |
| Large Skipper           | 26th June         | 15th July        |
| Large White             | 5th May           | 5th October      |
| Small White             | 5th May           | 24th October     |
| Green-veined White      | 19th May          | 31st August      |
| Orange Tip              | 26th April        | 21st June        |
| Brimstone               | 20th May          | 26th June        |
| Small Tortoiseshell     | 16th February     | 24th October     |
| Comma                   | 19th May          | 24th October     |
| Painted Lady            | 25th August       | 28th August      |
| Red Admiral             | 7th July          | 10th November    |
| Peacock                 | 6th April         | 1st December     |
| Meadow Brown            | 6th June          | 27th August      |
| Gatekeeper              | 14th July         | 23rd August      |
| Ringlet                 | 26th June         | 3rd August       |
| Small Heath             | -                 | -                |
| Speckled Wood           | 17th May          | 28th September   |
| Wall Brown              | -                 | -                |
| White-letter Hairstreak | -                 | -                |
| Small Copper            | 8th June          | 6th October      |
| Holly Blue              | 7th August        | 7th August       |
| Common Blue             | 23rd June         | 23rd June        |

## MOTHS

Largely due to the weather light traps were run on just seven nights in 2012. This year, thanks to a much better summer, we were able to set traps on 18 nights. Again there was no spring trapping done, the first trap being set on the night of 6th June. The acquisition of a portable Heath Trap powered by a car battery meant we were also able to try a number of different areas on the reserve including the Manager's Garden, Coppice, Reedbed and Education Pond area. Traps were also run every Tuesday night during the summer school holidays to give children an opportunity to see and learn about moths on Wednesday mornings.

146 species of macro moth were caught or seen this year, 11 of these new for the reserve. The new species were Lunar Hornet Moth, Large Twin-spot Carpet, Chevron, Spruce Carpet, Winter Moth, Rivulet, Broad-barred White, Grey Chi, Fen Wainscot, Scarce Silver-lines and Silky Wainscot.

Broad-barred White, caught on 11th July, is quite a scarce moth in Yorkshire so this was a nice record. The habitat is described as "vegetated coastal dunes, shingle and disturbed rough grassland, particularly on limestone and chalk downland" - so not a moth you would have expected to see in the Leeds area but there are a few other records.

Grey Chi, caught on the night of 7th August, is usually a moth of upland grassy places and is in national decline, so again a good record. The Fen Wainscot was caught on the night of 20th August near the Fish Pass. Silky Wainscot is slowly expanding its range in Yorkshire. Ten were caught on the night of 1st August in the Reedbed.

However, the macro moth of the year was almost certainly the Lunar Hornet Moth found by Jerry Knapp on the dead hedge by the Mike Sheldon Hide on 4th July. This is one of the Clearwings. There are about 1,000 species worldwide of which 14 are resident in the British Isles. These mimic wasps which is thought to give them protection from vertebrate predators. The adults of this species are very elusive

and most records are usually of larval tunnels in cut willow stumps, so the sighting and photographing of an adult was quite unusual.

87 species of micro moth were caught or seen this year, 12 of these new for the reserve. New species recorded this year were *Gracillaria syringella*, *Yponomeuta cagnagella* (Spindle Ermine), *Swammerdamia pyrella*, *Bryotropha domestica*, *Hypatima rhomboidella*, *Mompha subbistrigella*, *Aethes cnicana*, *Cydia pomonella* (Codling Moth), *Chilo phragmitella*, *Udea prunalis*, *Nomophila noctuella* (Rush Veneer) and *Aphomia sociella* (Bee Moth).

Although many micro moths are distinctive and readily identifiable others can be difficult to determine, particularly when species are very similar. Reference to genitalia through dissection can aid identification. Two moths came into this category this year and could not be accepted by the Vice County Records as dissection was not carried out. A moth caught on 23rd September was identified as either *Mompha divisella* or *Mompha bradleyi*. Both are classed as "Very Local" nationally. The preferred habitats are the same and the larval food plants for both species are willowherbs found on the reserve. Both species are very similar in appearance but *Mompha bradleyi* is said to usually have a slightly shorter and broader forewing and the dorsal area is duller white with a peppering of brown and grey scales. A bit annoying to miss out on this one. Let's hope we can catch another next year.

The other interesting micro moth, caught on 14th August, was identified as a *Phycitodes* sp. *Phycitodes saxicola* and *Phycitodes maritima* are very similar in appearance. Both are described as "predominantly coastal". However, *Phycitodes maritima* is said to be "found inland increasingly frequently in various habitats" and the larval food plants are composites including Yarrow, Common Ragwort and possibly also Tansy, all of which are found in abundance at Rodley. So there is a good chance our moth was *P. maritima* but again examination of genitalia would have proved this one way or the other.

Among the day-flying moths the Cinnabar continues to struggle with just one sighting of a single moth near the Lagoon on 1st July. This

species does sometimes come to light and two were caught in a trap on the Butterfly Bank on the night of 8th June. The larval food plant Ragwort is very common on the reserve and a few caterpillars were found between the Reedbed and the Duck Marsh in July with a few on the river path in August but numbers were very disappointing. Burnet Moths too were hard to find this year with just one record of a single moth on 14th July. The black Chimneysweeper is also just hanging on with one on the John Ackroyd Meadow on 19th June and one there again on 26th June.

The reserve list continues to grow, the total number of species recorded to date now being 339. Of these 203 are macro species and 136 micros.

## Dragonflies and Damselflies - 2013

This year there was a slow start to the adult season due to an unusually cold spell in the late Spring. Thus the Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*, a 'Spring species', was a week later appearing on the wing than in 2012. This delay was also apparent in some other species that start emerging early in the season such as the Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* and the Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx splendens*. Although adults of the Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella* first appeared only a couple of days later than last year (but more than three weeks later than in 2011) it took longer for their numbers to build up. Again there were small numbers of the Blue-tailed Damselfly. Sightings of the Large Red Damselfly are on the increase and the increase in the number of records of the Southern Hawker *Aeshna cyanea* in 2012 has been maintained. Although few in number, sightings of the Emerald Damselfly *Lestes sponsa* give reasons for optimism that it may eventually breed in the ponds. Also the first record since 2010 of the Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* is encouraging. A surprising sighting was that of a pair of Black Darters *Sympetrum danae*. A total of 15 species have been seen at the dragonfly ponds in 2013 (13 in 2012), the most common still being the Azure Damselfly, the Brown Hawker *Aeshna grandis* and the Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*. The indications are that maybe as many as eight species are breeding in the ponds, with the Banded Demoiselle breeding in the adjacent river and the Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum* breeding elsewhere on the reserve. A thorough search for exuviae in 2014 would help confirm the breeding status of the different species.

Peter J Mill

### **Large Red Damselfly** (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)

Last year was probably the best to date for this species as regards numbers and the improvement continued this year. Two observers reported sightings on 6th May - a male on the path by the Dipping Ponds (PL/ML) and a female at the Dragonfly Ponds (JS). This was six days later than the first sighting last year. There were no further sightings until 20th May but there were then reports most days thereafter. Breeding activity was first noted on 31st May - a pair in tandem on the Long Ditch at the Dragonfly Ponds (PM/BM). The best count of the year came on 3rd June with 12 (7 males and 5 females) at the Dragonfly Ponds including five pairs in tandem (PJM). On 8th June 11 (6 males and 5 females) were counted there with four pairs in tandem and one ovipositing (PJM). Ovipositing was also noted at the old Dipping Pond on 25th June and on Scarborough Pond on 26th June. A single insect on Scarborough Pond on 22nd July was the last reported sighting of the year (PM/BM), the same date as last year.

### **Azure Damselfly** (*Coenagrion puella*)

One at the Dragonfly Ponds on 25th May was the first of the year (JB/BM), just two days later than last year. Breeding activity was first observed on 31st May - single pairs in tandem on Bruce's Pond and the Long Ditch (PM/BM). The first double figure count was made on 3rd June with 24 (21 males and 3 females) at the ponds including two pairs in tandem (PJM). The first 100+ count came on 28th May last year. This year we had to wait until 8th June. There were several large counts made over the following few weeks, details of which are shown below.

| Site          | Date | Total | M   | F  | Wheel (pairs) | Tandem (pairs) | Ovip. (pairs) | Observer |
|---------------|------|-------|-----|----|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------|
| DFP           | 8/6  | 152   | 94  | 58 | 2             | 13             | 43            | PJM      |
| DFP           | 17/6 | 188   | 134 | 54 | 1             | 33             | 20            | PJM      |
| Dipping Ponds | 17/6 | 33    | 28  | 5  | -             | 4              | 1             | PJM      |
| DFP           | 8/7  | 98    | 76  | 22 | 2             | 12             | 8             | PJM      |
| DFP           | 15/7 | 101   | 64  | 37 | -             | 8              | 29            | PJM      |

Numbers fell away quickly after 15th July and there were just three sightings reported in August with no more than three insects seen. A

pair in tandem on Woodhead Pond on 16th August was the last of the year (PM/BM), more than three weeks earlier than last year.

**Common Blue Damselfly** (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)

Although this species does turn up at the Dragonfly Ponds it is much more likely to be found around the main water bodies, albeit in small numbers. However, four on one of the meadows on 1st June was the first reported sighting of the year (MC), nine days later than last year. Three were seen at the ponds on 5th June and one on 9th June (DC/EC). The most reliable site is the Lagoon and three were reported here on 8th July with four on 12th July, including a pair in tandem (PM/BM). This was the only breeding activity reported this year. A single insect seen in the same area on 9th August was the last of the year.

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

For the first time since detailed records began in 2004 there were no May sightings. One by the Lagoon on 1st June was the first of the year (JB), nine days later than last year. Single insects were reported thereafter at the Dipping Ponds, at the Dragonfly Ponds and at the edge of the Lagoon. Numbers have always been low at Rodley so to find between 100 and 500 on the middle island on the Lagoon during survey work on 5th July was somewhat of a surprise (JB/MB). The next highest count was just five at the edge of the Lagoon on 8th July. There were further reports of one or two insects during the remainder of July and just two August records, one at the Dragonfly Ponds on 25th August being the last of the year (DC/EC), just three days earlier than last year. There were no reports of breeding activity.

**Emerald Damselfly** (*Lestes sponsa*)

This species was first recorded on the reserve in 2006 but there were no records in 2008, 2009 and 2010. In 2011 there were two records and in 2012 again just two records. This year sightings were reported on three dates. A male on Chadwick Pond on 15th July was the first of the year (PJM *et al*), seven days earlier than last year. On 26th July one was seen on Co-op Pond (BM) and on 11th August two were reported at the ponds (JLW).

### **Banded Demoiselle** (*Calopteryx splendens*)

The number of sightings was well down on last year when this was the second most frequently recorded dragonfly on the reserve. Last year sightings covered the period from 24th May to 8th September whereas this year there were regular sightings throughout most of June but on only four dates in July and one date in August. A single male by the Lagoon on 6th June was the first of the year (JB/MB). The higher counts are always made close to the riverbank and five males and a female were seen here on 17th June, including a pair in tandem (JB/MB). On 21st June 13 were counted - four males and two females on the Fish Pass, three males and two females on the river path, a male on the Duck Marsh and a female outside the Visitor Centre (PM/BM *et al*). On 25th June four males and two females were again seen at the Fish Pass (PM/BM). No more than two were reported in July and two males at the Dragonfly Ponds on 7th August were the last of the year (JS/JLW)

### **Common Hawker** (*Aeshna juncea*)

This species shows a preference for acidic upland areas but there have been confirmed sightings here in the past. However, there were none this year.

### **Migrant Hawker** (*Aeshna mixta*)

A freshly emerged dragonfly at the side of Chadwick Pond on 8th August was the first of the year (PM/BM). This was the earliest record since 2007 and three weeks earlier than the first record in 2012. There were regular sightings thereafter with up to five seen at any one time but there were no reports of breeding activity. There were sightings at the Dragonfly Ponds, on the Wet Grassland, Reedbed, Fish Pass, Lagoon, Willow Path, Winter Walk and on the Butterfly Bank. A wet and often windy October curtailed sightings somewhat and three on 24th October were the last of the year (PM/BM), five days later than last year. Interestingly, one of these was on one of the new seasonal ponds near the Manager's Garden.

### **Southern Hawker** (*Aeshna cyanea*)

After a considerable improvement last year there were again a good number of records submitted this year. A teneral at the Dragonfly Ponds on 30th June was the first of the year (JLW). This was the second earliest ever first date for this species, beaten only by one on

25th June in 2009 and nearly six weeks earlier than the first record last year. Sightings were reported on just two dates in July - a male on Mabgate and Co-op Ponds on 6th (JB/PM) and a female ovipositing at the edge of the old Dipping Pond on 19th (PM). However, there were sightings on eight dates in August and six dates in September. There were reports of a female ovipositing on Co-op Pond on 3rd August (JH) and at an unnamed pond on 18th August (JS). Most records came from the Dragonfly Ponds but there was also a report of a male on the Lagoon on 21st September (JLW). Wet and windy weather curtailed activity in October and a male on the Long Ditch at the Dragonfly Ponds on 6th October was the last of the year (JS *et al*), some two weeks earlier than last year.

### **Brown Hawker** (*Aeshna grandis*)

This is always the most frequently recorded and the most numerous of the larger dragonflies on the reserve. The first sightings are usually made in the last days of June or the first week in July and this year was no exception with one at the Dragonfly Ponds on 30th June (JLW), just four days earlier than last year. There were daily sightings thereafter on all the wetland areas. As usual there was a lot of breeding activity to observe. Ovipositing was first noted on the Pebble Beach Pond on 14th July (BM), nearly three weeks earlier than last year. On 22nd July three females were ovipositing on Scarborough Pond, one on the Pebble Beach Pond and two on Bruce's Pond (PM/BM). On 1st August 10 were seen ovipositing on six different ponds (PM/BM). Ovipositing was last recorded on 27th September - a single female on Co-op Pond. Single dragonflies at the ponds and on the Duck Marsh on 6th October were the last reported sightings of the year, just one day earlier than last year. There were again numerous reports of this dragonfly hunting at dawn and dusk.

### **Emperor Dragonfly** (*Anax imperator*)

2010 and 2011 each produced four records with two records in 2012 and two again this year. A male was seen on the Lagoon on 12th July and a female was photographed ovipositing on Woodhead Pond on 26th July (PM/BM).

### **Four-spotted Chaser** (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

It was another poor year for this species. Last year produced just three records and this year four. A female was seen at the Dragonfly

Ponds on 2nd June (JH), six days later than the first sighting last year. A female was again seen at the ponds on 3rd July. Single dragonflies were also reported at the ponds on 6th July (JS) and on Co-op Pond on 14th July (PM/BM *et al*).

**Broad-bodied Chaser** (*Libellula depressa*)

It was a disappointing year, with sightings reported on just seven dates. A female on Bentley's Path on 19th May was the first (JS), six days later than last year. A female was seen on the Pebble Beach Pond on 7th June (PM/BM); two males were at the ponds on 8th June (PJM) and a female was at the old Dipping Pond on 14th June (PM/BM). In July a female was seen on the Wet Grassland on 3rd (BJ/PA) and a male was at the Dragonfly Ponds on 6th (JS). There was just one other record - a male on the Duck Marsh on 3rd August (DC/EC), eight days earlier than the last sighting in 2012.

**Common Darter** (*Sympetrum striolatum*)

This was the second most frequently recorded dragonfly on the reserve this year. There was again an early record of one on a path near the Dragonfly Ponds on 12th June (DC/EC), six days later than last year. Like last year there was then a gap of more than a month before the next sighting on 15th July of two on the Pebble Beach Pond (PM/BM). There were regular sightings throughout the remainder of July, August and September. Breeding activity was first noted on 8th August - single females ovipositing on the Long Ditch and on Mabgate Pond (PM/BM). The best counts were very similar to last year with 12 on 8th August, 10 on 27th August, 10 on 14th September and eight on 27th September. The large majority of sightings were at the Dragonfly Ponds with a handful at the Dipping Ponds, two on the Wet Grassland, two on the Duck Marsh and one on the Kingfisher Pool. There were sightings on just two dates in October in what had been a wet and windy month. Three were seen at the ponds on 6th and a rare warm, sunny day on 24th produced single males on Woodhead Pond, Co-op Pond and Chadwick Pond (PM/BM). One at the ponds on a windy but sunny 3rd November was the last of the year (ST), nearly two weeks later than last year.

**Ruddy Darter** (*Sympetrum sanguineum*)

There were again no confirmed sightings this year. This species has not been seen on the reserve since 2009 when there were two records.

**Black Darter** (*Sympetrum danae*)

A new species for the reserve this year, Black Darters are a familiar sight on bogs and moors in northern regions but are not a species we would have expected to find at Rodley. A male was photographed at the edge of Mabgate Pond on 27th September and shortly afterwards it re-appeared in tandem with a female over the same pond (PM/BM). There were no subsequent sightings.

**Black-tailed Skimmer** (*Orthetrum cancellatum*)

A female photographed at the Pebble Beach Pond on 1st August (PM/BM) was the first record since 17th August 2010. There were no other sightings.

**Terminology**

Exuvia - The shed larval skin. Plural: exuviae

Ovipositing - The act of egg laying

Teneral - A newly emerged adult dragonfly without the full coloration of the mature adult. Strictly speaking before its maiden flight.

**Dragonflies and Damselflies**  
**First and Last Dates - 2013**

| <b>Species</b>        | <b>First Date</b> | <b>Last date</b> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Large Red Damselfly   | 6th May           | 22nd July        |
| Azure Damselfly       | 25th May          | 16th August      |
| Common Blue Damselfly | 1st June          | 9th August       |
| Blue-tailed Damselfly | 1st June          | 25th August      |
| Emerald Damselfly     | 15th July         | 11th August      |
| Banded Demoiselle     | 6th June          | 7th August       |
| Common Hawker         | -                 | -                |
| Migrant Hawker        | 8th August        | 24th October     |
| Southern Hawker       | 30th June         | 6th October      |
| Brown Hawker          | 30th June         | 6th October      |
| Emperor Dragonfly     | 12th July         | 26th July        |
| Four-spotted Chaser   | 2nd June          | 14th July        |
| Broad-bodied Chaser   | 19th May          | 3rd August       |
| Common Darter         | 12th June         | 3rd November     |
| Ruddy Darter          | -                 | -                |
| Black Darter          | 27th September    | 27th September   |
| Black-tailed Skimmer  | 1st August        | 1st August       |

## Invertebrates in the Dragonfly Ponds and in the adjacent River Aire

The 'dragonfly ponds' include the eight ponds, long ditch and marsh region in the north-east of the reserve; also the adjacent 'Education Pond'.

### Dragonfly Ponds

#### Aquatic Insects

Probably the most abundant insect larvae are those of the Pond or Lake Dun mayfly *Clöeon dipterum*; indeed in the winter months almost every sample taken from the ponds yielded numerous individuals of this species. The other mayfly larva found was a species of *Caenis* (the Angler's Curse) but this year only in the Education Pond. The larvae of the Brown Hawker dragonfly *Aeshna grandis* have again been found in good numbers but, surprisingly, larvae of the Common Darter dragonfly *Sympetrum striolatum* were not encountered in 2013. As in 2012, the larvae of three species of damselfly have been found, *i.e.* The Azure Damselfly *Coenagrion puella*, the Blue-tailed Damselfly *Ischnura elegans* and the Large Red Damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*. Particularly pleasing was the increase in the numbers of the last species, an increase also witnessed with adult recording (see separate article).

Lesser Water Boatmen (corixids) and Water Boatmen or Back Swimmers (notonectids) were also plentiful. While the notonectids are carnivorous and have a sharp rostrum that can penetrate flesh, the corixids have a reduced rostrum and feed on small organisms and detritus, using the fringes on the forelegs to sift through the muddy bottoms of ponds. Other hemipterans (true bugs) seen included the Water Skater *Gerris lacustris*, in abundance, and several individuals of the Saucer Bug *Ilyocoris cimicoides*, which were frequently found in the Education Pond in late summer and autumn; also the Water Scorpion *Nepa cinerea* (always a 'star-turn' when found on school visits).

This year an Alder fly larva *Sialis lutaria* was found; the adults of this species are quite commonly found around the edges of the ponds in early summer. Dipteran larvae are always plentiful, especially

Phantom Midge larvae (*Chaoborus* sp.). Other dipteran larvae found included the strange *Petrocladius obvius*, which lives in a soft tube, from which it sometimes emerges completely, *Probezzia* sp. and also *Chironomus* spp., including the Bloodworm, which was seen frequently.

The swimming caddisfly larvae of *Triaenodes bicolor* were particularly common in the Education pond; they live in conical cases made of spirally arranged plant fragments. Most caddis larvae are not easy to identify to species level but species of *Limnephilus* were present in the ponds; also larvae probably belonging to *Glyphotalius pellucidus*. Adult caddis have been trapped on the reserve and include *Limnephilus flavicornis*, *L. lunatus* and *L. marmoratus*. Hopefully, in 2014 we will get better at identifying the larvae.

As last year, larvae of the Brown China-Mark Moth *Elophila* (*Nymphula*) *nymphaeata* were found but not those of *Cataclysta lemnata* (the Small China-Mark), which was much more common round the ponds as an adult. *Elophila* caterpillars live in small oval cases made from 'cut-out' sections of leaves; in our ponds usually from Fringed Water Lily. Finally the springtail *Sminthurides aquaticus* was seen leaping around on the surface of the Education Pond. This tiny primitive insect, only about 1mm long, uses its tail to launch itself into the air, giving the appearance of vibrating particles of yellow dust on the surface of the water.

Amongst the beetles, the Whirligig Beetle *Gyrinus* sp. was exceptionally common on the Education Pond but not elsewhere; this year several specimens of its larvae were found. Like the adults, *Gyrinus* larvae are very fast moving and hard to photograph. A few other water beetles were also recorded, including the Screech Beetle *Hygrobia tarda* (*hermanni*) and one of the diving beetles *Colymbetes fuscus* (Table 1). This year we were fortunate to be able to find several larvae of water beetles (in addition to the Whirligigs). Beetle larvae are not easy to identify to species level and for one *Colymbetes* larva we enlisted the help of the Natural History Museums Nature Plus website ID forum. Arguably the most exciting find was that of several specimens of larvae of *Dytiscus* species of Diving Beetles. One showed itself to a Stanningley Primary School visit in late May, while another was a star find on our 'Spring at

Rodley' event in June. These scary looking beasts are fierce predators. They seize prey with their sickle-shaped mandibles through which they pump digestive juices and then suck up the liquefied remains! The individual pictured in this report was 25-30mm long and was probably a larva of *Dytiscus marginalis*, the Great Diving Beetle. The adult of this beetle is as exciting and nearly as ferocious as its larva; it can grow up to 35mm long and we anxiously await sitings of it! The photo shows its tail end is fringed with hairs which help it connect to the surface of the water so that the two spiracles which are at the end of the abdomen between the cerci (the two 'spikes at the tail end) come into contact with the surface allowing the larva to 'breath' air. At the other end one can see its strange 'eyes' made up of a hexagonal array of stemmata (eye spots), like something from a 'sci-fi' design! Several other beetle larvae were collected but not fully identified.

### Table 1. Aquatic insects

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Collembola    | <i>Sminthurides aquaticus</i>  |
| Ephemeroptera | <i>Cloëon dipterum</i> Pond (Lake) Olive Dun<br><i>Caenis</i> sp.  |
| Odonata       |  |
| Zygoptera     | <i>Coenagrion puella</i> Azure Damselfly<br><i>Ischnura elegans</i> Blue-tiled Damselfly<br><i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i> Large Red Damselfly   |
| Anisoptera    | <i>Aeshna grandis</i> Brown Hawker   |
| Hemiptera     |  |
| Heteroptera   | <i>Corixa</i> sp. Lesser Water Boatman<br><i>Notonecta</i> sp. Back Swimmer<br><i>Ilyocoris cimicoides</i> Saucer Bug<br><i>Gerris lacutris</i> Water Skater<br><i>Nepa cinerea</i> Water Scorpion |

Neuroptera  
 Megaloptera (Alder flies & Snake flies)  
*Sialis lutaria*

Diptera  
 Nematocera  
 Chaoboridae  
*Chaoborus* sp. Phantom Midge larva  
 Chironomidae  
*Psectrocladius obvius*  
*Chironomus* sp.  
 Ceratopogonidae  
*Probezzia* sp.

Trichoptera  
 Limnephilidae  
*Glyptotendipes pellucidus* (probably)  
*Limnephilus* sp.  
*Triaenodes bicolor*

Lepidoptera  
*Elophila (Nymphula) nymphaeata* (Brown China-Mark Moth)

Coleoptera  
*Colymbetes fuscus*  
*Gyrinus* sp. (probably *G. natator*) Whirligig Beetle  
*Hygrobia tarda (hermanni)*  
*Dytiscus* sp. (probably *D. marginalis*)

Two flatworms were recorded in 2013. One was either *Schmidtea (Dugesia) lugubris* or *D. polychroa*; the other was a species of *Polycelis*, almost certainly *P. tenuis*. Two species of leech were also found, *Erpobdella testacea* and *Hemiclepsis marginata*. The former, unlike most leeches, does not suck blood but rather ingests its prey (small worms and insect larvae) whole.

The sideways-flattened amphipod crustacean *Crangonyx pseudogracilis* was again very widespread and abundant; also common was the isopod *Asellus aquaticus*. Two other small crustaceans were also present, the water-flea *Daphnia* sp. and the

copepod *Cyclops* sp., the latter, as the name implies, having just a single eye.

Five molluscan species were recorded, four of which were gastropods and common. Two of the gastropods belong to the family Lymnaeidae - the Pond Snail *Lymnea stagnalis* and *Radix balthica* – the other two to the family Planorbidae - the Great Ramshorn *Planorbarius corneus* and the Keeled Ramshorn *Planorbis carinata*. The fifth species was from the Education Pond and was a bivalve, probably *Pisidium* sp, (Table 2).

### Table 2. Other aquatic invertebrates

|  |
|--|
| Platyhelminthes  |
| Tricladida   |
| Dugesiidae   |
| <i>Schmidtea (Dugesia) lugubris</i> or <i>S. polychroa</i> |
| Planariidae  |
| <i>Polycelis tenuis</i>                                    |
| Annelida   |
| Hirudinea  |
| Rhynchobdellida  |
| <i>Erpobdella testacea</i>                                 |
| <i>Hemiclepsis marginata</i>                               |
| Crustacea - Malacostraca                                   |
| Amphipoda  |
| <i>Crangonyx pseudogracilis</i>                            |
| Isopoda  |
| <i>Asellus aquaticus</i>                                   |
| Crustacea – Branchiopoda                                   |
| Cladocera  |
| <i>Daphnia</i> sp.   |
| Copepoda   |
| <i>Cyclops</i> sp.   |
| Mollusca   |
| Gastropoda   |
| Lymnaeidae   |
| <i>Radix balthica</i>                                      |
| <i>Lymnea stagnalis</i>                                    |

Planorbidae  
    *Planorbarius corneus*  
    *Planorbis carinata*  
Bivalvia  
    *Pisidium* sp.

### **The River Aire**

The river was sampled for the first time in 2013 but only on one occasion. The fauna obtained was rather limited (Table 3) but the sampling did occur rather late in the season, after the mayfly hatch. A large, white flatworm, *Dendrocoelum lacteum*, was found; this species has a single pair of eyes. There were two species of leech. *Erpobdella octoculata* is another species that feeds by ingesting its prey whole, while *Glossiphonia complanata* is a large leech with six eyes and feeds mostly on snails. Only one species of caddis was recorded, a species of *Hydropsyche* which is one of the caseless caddis. The crustaceans were represented by the amphipod *Gammarus* sp., while the one species of snail found was *Radix balthica*, a species also found in the ponds.

**Table 3. Aquatic invertebrates in the river**

Platyhelminthes  
    Tricladida  
        Planariidae  
            *Dendrocoelum lacteum*  
Annelida  
    Hirudinea  
        Rhynchobdellida  
            *Erpobdella octoculata*  
            *Glossiphonia complanata*  
Insecta  
    Trichoptera  
        *Hydropsyche* sp.  
Crustacea - Malacostraca  
    Amphipoda

*Gammarus* sp.  
Mollusca  
Gastropoda  
Lymnaeidae  
*Radix balthica*

Thanks to Ian Wallace of the National Museums, Liverpool for help with identifying adult caddisflies.

Jerry Knapp & Peter Mill

## Harlequin Ladybirds at Rodley Nature Reserve An Update

This species is now well established on the reserve and was more widely recorded than any other ladybird species this year. Native to eastern Asia, the harlequin ladybird - *Harmonia axyridis* - was introduced to North America and Europe to control aphids and scale insects. Since its introduction to North America in 1988, it has increased dramatically and is now the most widespread ladybird species on the continent. Said to be the most invasive ladybird in the world, it has already invaded much of northwestern Europe. It arrived in the UK in 2004 and can now be found almost everywhere, although it is still uncommon in Wales and rare in Scotland and the far north of England. It is known here as the harlequin ladybird because it occurs in numerous colour forms. The two most common forms in the UK are orange with 15 to 21 black spots and black with two or four orange or red spots. It can be difficult to tell apart from some of our native species but it is considerably bigger.

Following its first appearance on the reserve in 2009, there were further records in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The majority of reports tend to be of the common orange form (*H. axyridis succinea*) but there have also been a few records of the black form with two or four orange spots (*H. axyridis conspicua*).

Sightings this year covered the period from 21st June to 11th November. Most involved just one or two insects and came from various parts of the reserve including the Sensory Garden, riverside path, Willow Path and the path to the Manager's Garden. Ladybirds are on occasions attracted to the light of the moth trap and an unusual orange form with just a few small black spots was found in a moth trap on the Butterfly Bank on 24th September (PM/BM). On 20th October three of the common orange form were found on the insect tower just outside the Manager's Garden and on 11th November 14 were found on the picnic table in the same area (PM/BM). These included four different forms - Black with 4 orange spots (3), black with two orange spots (1), black with multiple orange spots (2) and the common orange form (8).

There were few reports of the native 7-spot ladybird (*Coccinella 7 - punctata*) in any numbers this year and just a handful of records of 2-spot ladybird (*Adalia 2-punctata*) and 22 -spot ladybird (*Thea 22-punctata*).

### **Tree Bumblebees at Rodley Nature Reserve An Update**

A common bumblebee species in continental Europe and northern Asia, the tree bumblebee (*Bombus hypnorum*) was first found in the UK in 2001 but it has now spread throughout most of England and Wales. It prefers to nest above ground and often inhabits bird boxes. Queens, workers and males all have a black head, brown-ginger thorax and black abdomen with a white tail.

First recorded on the reserve on 10th June 2009, there were a number of sightings of single tree bumblebees (*Bombus hypnorum*) between 19th May and 21st June in 2011 and in 2012 there were reports on just four dates between 12th June and 5th July, all of single bumblebees. There was a significant increase in the number of records this year with sightings spanning the period from 25th May to 27th September.

There was a report of one on the entry road on 25th May (JH) but we then had to wait until 21st June for the next records when a total of five were seen on different parts of the reserve. Two were found on dog rose in the hedge at the Dragonfly Ponds; one was on Bentley's Path and two were on comfrey at the Wet Grassland Hide (PM/BM). On 25th June single bumblebees were seen on hogweed on the Willow Path, on marsh cinquefoil at the Dragonfly Ponds, again on comfrey at the Wet Grassland Hide and on the Fish Pass (PM/BM). There were subsequent sightings on hogweed, clover, teasel and purple loosestrife.

The final record of the year came on 27th September when one was seen feeding on the flowers of fodder radish on Tim's Field (PM/BM). This plant was a magnet for butterflies and bumblebees generally this

year and it is clearly going to be a place to search for this species in the future.

### **The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)**

This survey is a joint scheme of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), in association with Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), to monitor non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. The principal aims of the scheme are to identify population sizes, determine trends in numbers and distribution and identify important sites for water birds. Monthly coordinated counts are made by volunteers throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Rodley Nature Reserve is delighted to be involved in WeBS.

### **Botanical Surveys**

We are grateful to Bradford Botany Group for providing a comprehensive list of species identified during their visit to the reserve on 5th June 2013. Orchids are few and far between here but a small population of Southern Marsh Orchids (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) was again found between the Reedbed and Duck Marsh despite the advance of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). The nationally scarce Orange Foxtail (*Alopecurus aequalis*) was again found on the wetlands. A full list of species identified is available on request.

## Survey of Algae in 2013

With 90 species identified, the better summer of 2013 reflected in garden flowers and algal growth. There have been some gains and a few losses: do those which appear only once be regarded as flukes, or are they buried in the mud at the bottom? Diatoms are typical of this. The appearance of *Netrium* in June was certainly a fluke as these are normally found a thousand feet up in moorland ponds.

Sadly, *pleurotaenium*, a stick-like desmid, seems to be in decline, whereas the attractive xanthophyte *Goniochloris*, once rare, has established its self and was found in seven months. After an interval of several years, the tiny *Tetraedron*, once thronging the dipping pond, as well as the rough-to-the-touch *Rhizoclonium* appeared once more. Two years ago, *Tolypothrix* with its distinctive false branching was found over several months in the fourth dragonfly pond; where is it now? *Calothrix* was found as late as December, but may in fact be hiding somewhere over many months.

The survey print-out in the Visitor Centre shows clearly which species are only seen in summer months, yet April is the great kick-off when the all year rounders burst into life. Disliked by some, *Hydrodictyon* is sure to occur in the larger water masses. The newer dipping pond and the furthest away round pond in the north east corner, delight the amateur phychologist.

John R Hey

## Fungus Report 2013

The annual fungus foray took place on Sunday 20th October this year and we were once again fortunate to have Mary Lerner leading it for us. There was the usual good turnout of participants and 24 species were found, several of which were new for the reserve. This year we concentrated our search in the area of trees near the Manager's Garden and in the Coppice. A full list of the species identified is shown below.

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| <i>Ascocoryne sarcoides</i>               | Purple Jellydisc      |
| <i>Auricularia auricula-judae</i>         | Jelly-ear             |
| <i>Clavulinopsis helvola</i>              | Yellow Club           |
| <i>Clitocybe gibba</i>                    | Common Funnel         |
| <i>Collybia dryophila</i>                 | Russet Toughshank     |
| <i>Conocybe arrhenii</i>                  | Ringed Conecap        |
| <i>Coprinopsis lagopus</i>                | Hare'sfoot Inkcap     |
| <i>Coprinus micaceus</i>                  | Glistening Inkcap     |
| <i>Crepidotus mollis</i>                  | Peeling Oysterling    |
| <i>Dacrymyces stillatus</i>               | Common Jellyspot      |
| <i>Daedaleopsis confragosa</i>            | Blushing Bracket      |
| <i>Entoloma conferendum</i>               | Star Pinkgill         |
| <i>Galerina hypnorum</i>                  | Moss Bell             |
| <i>Hebeloma crustuliniforme</i>           | Poisonpie             |
| <i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>              | Sulphur Tuft          |
| <i>Mycena aetites</i>                     | Drab Bonnet           |
| <i>Mycena flavoalba</i>                   | Ivory Bonnet          |
| <i>Mycena leptocephala</i>                | Nitrous Bonnet        |
| <i>Psathyrella corrugis (ex gracilis)</i> | Red Edge Brittlestem  |
| <i>Stereum gausapatum</i>                 | Bleeding Curtaincrust |
| <i>Stereum hirsutum</i>                   | Hairy Curtaincrust    |
| <i>Stropharia aeruginosa</i>              | Verdigris Agaric      |
| <i>Stropharia caerulea</i>                | Blue Roundhead        |
| <i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>                  | Candlesnuff           |

Among other species identified this year were the following:

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| <i>Calvatia gigantea</i>                              | Giant Puffball        |
| <i>Claviceps purpurea</i>                             | Ergot                 |
| <i>Coprinellus disseminatus</i>                       | Fairy Inkcap          |
| <i>Coprinellus domesticum</i><br>(ozonium only)       | Firebug Inkcap        |
| <i>Diatrype stigma</i>                                | Tar Crust             |
| <i>Hyphodontia sambuci</i>                            | Elder Whitewash       |
| <i>Lepiota cristata</i>                               | Stinking Parasol      |
| <i>Lepista inversa (flaccida)</i>                     | Birch Tawny Funnel    |
| <i>Macrolepiota rhacodes</i>                          | Shaggy Parasol        |
| <i>Marasmius oreades</i>                              | Fairy Ring Champignon |
| <i>Mycena filopes</i>                                 | Iodine Bonnet         |
| <i>Mycena vitilis</i>                                 | Snapping Bonnet       |
| <i>Myxarium nucleatum</i> =<br><i>Exidia nucleata</i> | Crystal Brain         |
| <i>Panaeolina foenisecii</i>                          | Mower's Mushroom      |
| <i>Panaeolus fimicola</i>                             | Turf Mottlegill       |
| <i>Paxillus involutus</i>                             | Brown Rollrim         |
| <i>Postia tephroleuca</i>                             | Greyling Bracket      |
| <i>Poyporus varius</i>                                | Blackfoot Polypore    |
| <i>Psathyrella conopilus</i>                          | Conical Brittlestem   |
| <i>Sphaerobolus stellatus</i>                         | Shooting Star         |
| <i>Trametes pubescens</i>                             |                       |
| <i>Trametes versicolor</i>                            | Turkeytail            |

Probably the best find this year was *Sphaerobolus stellatus*. Ironically, it was found growing on a bit of decaying chipboard rather than on a lovely old willow stump (AW).

Among some of the larger specimens, the Giant Puffball (*Calvatia gigantea*) was again found this year, this time on the Scrubland (JK) and in November an excellent stand of very large Shaggy Parasols (*Macrolepiota rhacodes*) at the far end of the car park attracted a lot of attention.

We are grateful to Mary Larner for leading another excellent foray and to Andrew Woodall (AW) and Jerry Knapp (JK) for providing their records.

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| A Barber     | AB  | R Grainger   | RG   | P Murphy     | PM   |
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| S Barton     | SBa | D Gregory    | DG   | G O'Brien    | GO'B |
| S Beach      | SB  | P Griffin    | PG   | A Pollard    | Apo  |
| A Blackwell  | Abl | B Hargreaves | BH   | G Phillips   | GP   |
| R Blagg      | RB  | J Hayter     | JH   | J Pickard    | JP   |
| D Briggs     | DB  | S Henderson  | SH   | K Pickles    | KP   |
| J Brook      | JB  | B Hewitt     | BH   | C Pottle     | CP   |
| M Brook      | MB  | L Jenkinson  | LJ   | M Rees       | MR   |
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| M Cooper     | MC  | P Larnar     | PL   | A Thomas     | AT   |
| D Cowan      | DC  | M Larnar     | ML   | A Thompson   | ATh  |
| E Cowan      | EC  | K Limb       | KL   | B Thompson   | BTh  |
| R Davis      | RD  | P Limb       | PL   | N Tonge      | NT   |
| C Ducker     | CD  | L Loader     | LL   | D Walker     | DW   |
| S Excell     | SE  | R McDermott  | RMcD | J L Walker   | JLW  |
| J Exley      | JE  | J Middleton  | JM   | P Walker     | PW   |
| S Fairclough | SF  | B Mills      | Bmi  | G Welch      | GW   |
| C Fitton     | CF  | P J Mill     | PJM  | M Wilkinson  | MW   |
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|              |     |              |      | A Woodall    | AW   |

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