

LODMOOR AREA REPORT 2015

Early winter

The adult **Richard's pipit** spent January in the fields above Bowleaze. Extra coverage of the area helps explain records there of 5 fly over **Goosander** and a **Grey partridge**, one the Lodmoor area's rarest vagrants of the year.

The reserve itself played host to up to 3 **Scaup** and a Greenland race **White fronted goose**. A cold snap in February saw **Lapwing** numbers climb to an impressive peak of 950. The only other really noteworthy record early on was a **Siberian chiffchaff**.

Spring

It's a long time since two species of partridge appeared on a Lodmoor year list. But a **Red legged partridge** that wandered across a birder's garden in mid March made it an unexpected game bird double. Long staying **Spoonbills**, on the other hand, are now a fixture in spring and up to 3 spent several weeks catching up on their sleep February and March.

Several **Sand martins** kicked off passerine migration on March 7th. Subsequently most of the usual suspects moved through in mainly the usual numbers on roughly the usual dates. The exception to that general rule was a '**Channel' wagtail**, the first time this form has been recorded on Lodmoor.

Spring wader migration was again really pretty poor. **Dunlin** numbers were particularly disappointing.

The exceptions to the general rule were a healthy count of **Whimbrel** and exceptional numbers -- by Dorset standards -- of spring **Greenshank**.

Rare/scarcely birds included the **Bonaparte's gull**, which had flown all the way from Radipole, a first winter **Little gull**, 6 pale bellied **Brent geese**, no fewer than 5 different **Red kites**, and a lingering **Nightingale**.

For many people, however, the bird of the spring was May's long staying -- and occasionally very obliging -- first summer **Purple heron**.

But, as is often the case, the spring arguably saved the best to last...if you were lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time: a **Bee-eater** went over, calling, and a **Honey buzzard** arrived in off, both on May 26th. Last but not least Weymouth Bay played host to a June **Black throated diver**.

Breeding

Water birds that definitely bred included **Mute swan**, **Gadwall**, **Shoveler**, **Pochard**, **Tufted duck**, **Little and Great crested grebes**, and **Water rail**. In addition two pair of displaying **Teal** frequented Overcombe in early June.

One of the highlights of any birding year at Lodmoor are the **Marsh harriers**. And they did the business again ...rearing no fewer than four juveniles.

No new breeding birds this year but one that returned. **Stonechats** successfully nested again for the first time in 10 years.

It generally appeared to be a very good spring and summer for a number of common birds -- ranging from **Moorhens** to **Long tailed tits** and **Reed warblers**. Less common but regular breeders included **Stock dove**, **Buzzard**, **Coal tit**, **Bearded reedling** and **Goldcrest**. **Treecreeper** and **Jay** again both nested in Two Mile Coppice.

And a reeling **Grasshopper warbler** in mid summer hinted at what may also have been.

Some of the most dramatic, and upsetting, events of the year were centred on the tern islands. There a pair of **Oystercatchers** successfully raised two chicks (following a rare blank year in 2014). But the **Common tern** colony was not so lucky. What looked very much like the same individual **Herring gull** worked out how to take the tern chicks and ate its way through almost the entire colony. It may also have been why the **Black headed gull** chicks disappeared. Sadly just 3 tern chicks made it to fledging.

Autumn

In a year in which there were relatively few major rarities the autumn produced a terrific run of scarce migrants.

Passage begun with two surprises: Lodmoor's first ever mid summer **Wheatear** was quickly followed by

the area's first summer record of **Nuthatch**. Another record was broken with the highest ever late summer/early autumn counts of **Mediterranean gulls**.

These were swiftly followed by arguably THE bird of the autumn: a juvenile **Kentish plover** on Preston beach. August --which also featured some obligingly long staying **Wood sandpipers** and an impressive run of **Ruff** and **Redshank** -- ended with another major Lodmoor rarity: the area's second ever **Goshawk**. September highlights included 2 different **Great egrets**, Lodmoor's latest ever **Little ringed plover**, a juvenile **Black tern**, and by Lodmoor standards, a good smattering of **Redstarts**, **Whinchats** and **Spotted flycatchers**.

October got off to a flyer with a Continental race **Coal tit**, the first of at least two **Yellow browed warblers** and two **Glossy ibis**. The supporting cast included 5 **Spoonbill**, a run of **Short eared owls**, a **Dartford warbler** and a bumper autumn for grounded **Blackcaps** and **Goldcrests**.

But it was the third week that produced two of the birds of the month: **Long eared owl** and **Red backed shrike**. And in a year of record counts the area's biggest ever flock of **Teal** turned up before October was out.

Things were quieter in November but featured garden bird of the year: a **Ring ouzel**.

Visible migration

A narrative of 2015 wouldn't be complete without an account of probably the best vis migging since 2005. The headline species was **Siskin**. Indeed if we were Chinese it would probably be the year of the Siskin ! A staggering total of 2,000/2,500 birds passed over.

September also featured some really impressive numbers of all three hirundines. And there was quality as well as quantity. **Lesser redpolls**, **Crossbills**, and **Yellowhammers** all went over in record numbers, along with a **Woodlark**, a **Lapland bunting** and a **Tree sparrow**.

Late winter

Many of the noteworthy records were packed into late November and early December. They included 3 **Eider**, a long staying **Scaup**, a wintering **Sandwich tern**, another **Siberian chiffchaff**, the year's only **Black redstart** and up to 8 **Water pipits**. The dying embers of the year was enlivened by another **Goosander**.

Weymouth Bay was often an inexplicably diver free zone but nevertheless produced the spectacular sight of an amazing 950 **Mediterranean gulls**. A series of late December gales may help explain a fly past **Black guillemot**, an unseasonal **Gannet** influx and at least two **Little gulls**.

The year list and the Lodmoor area list

186 species recorded(182 in 2014, 187 in 2013, and 198 in 2012). Species NOT seen this year included Barnacle goose, Curlew sandpiper, Spotted redshank, and -- for the second year in a row -- any skuas. What is the total Lodmoor area list ? Well, it depends on what you count. Including Weymouth Bay etc I've come up with a neat total of exactly 300.

That excludes a number of potential plastics: Red breasted goose, Ruddy shelduck, Hooded merganser, Great bustard and Rock dove. Nor have I -- unlike some lists -- given species status to well marked races/potential splits including Greenland white fronted goose, Pale belled brent, Blue headed/Grey headed wagtails, White wagtail, or Siberian chiffchaff. Take your pick.

If you want to add a new bird to the Lodmoor area list here are some candidates among the species still waiting to be recorded: Green winged teal, Surf scoter, Black crowned night heron, American golden plover, Broad billed sandpiper, Lesser spotted woodpecker, Siberian stonechat, Great reed warbler, Red breasted flycatcher, Mealy redpoll, Common rosefinch. Oh, and any species of penguin.

The recording area

The nature reserve and surrounding area. To the east as far as Redcliff Point. To the south the sea. To the west Greenhill/Cranford Ave(incl. Country Park). To the north west Weymouth RFC, the parkride. To the north Two Mile Coppice, Lorton VC and Coffin Wood. To the north east Southdown Ridge/Charlbury Corner(to Charlbury Basin) and round to the Bowleaze/holiday camp areas.

The observers

Richard Morris, Geoff and Sheila Barlow, Nevil Fowler, Dave Chown, Jon White, John and Sue Campbell, Roy and Maureen, and me.

Systematic order

The species list is in the newly adopted order, based on the latest taxonomy and now accepted world wide. This is a lot to take in if you are not used to it. Falcons, for example, now follow Woodpeckers... Old World Warblers are now split into several separate families incl. Sylviid babblers (what were once sylvia warblers) ... robins and chats are in fact flycatchers not thrushes. Etc, etc. It is confusing but this being the 21st century I guess we all have to get used to it.

I've also tried to use the more recently accepted English names for most, but not all, species. I'm buggered if I'm referring to Guillemot as a Common murre.

Daragh Croxson
March 2016

SYSTEMATIC LIST

+ all records Weymouth Bay unless stated

* all records given

PHOTO in the case of Lodmoor rarities indicates a photograph was taken

Rarities to Lodmoor -- as opposed to very scarce species -- are indicated in red.

WB: Weymouth Bay. 2MC: Two Mile Coppice. CP: Lodmoor Country Park

Greylag goose *Anser anser

Feral birds Mch 11th, 24th, 2 Apr 4th, 1 15th.

Greenland White fronted goose *Anser albifrons (flavirostris)

1 record:

Overcombe Jan 27th, 31st and Feb 6th, with Canadas.

Despite the dodgy company it was keeping this bird seemed entirely wild. It was hard to catch up with mainly because it commuted early morning to Osmington or Abbotsbury and often failed to return until after dark.

A genuine Dorset rarity and only the 3rd Lodmoor record, following 1 Oct 2002 and 2 Nov 2007.

Canada goose *Branta Canadensis*

Breeding: at least 4 pairs were sitting in Apr and raised about 20 goslings. Interestingly the breeding population seems to have plateaued. Once again, however, about 100 birds had gathered by mid June and regularly invaded the new tern island... although probably after any prospecting terns had already abandoned.

Autumn: the usual late summer arrivals peaked at 570 Aug 31st, with more than 500 regularly Spt. Number fell to around 70 birds by the end of the year.

Flightless Phil, the bird with a broken wing, survived for at least its 4th year.

Dark bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*

Early on a total of about 55 turned up on 14 dates Jan-Mch incl. 10 in bay Jan 1st, 12 in bay Mch 6th. They were followed by 22 on Apr 3rd and 7 with pale bellieds in bay Apr 29th.

In the autumn of total of about 50 were noted Spt 30th - Dec 28th. Max. 10 in bay Oct 5th.

+Pale bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota

2 records WB:

6, with dark bellieds Apr 29th.

4 east Spt 15th.

Mute swan *Cygnus olor*

Breeding: 4 pairs bred, a slight improvement on 2014. They appeared to successfully raise 7, 5, 5, 4 cygnets.

At the start of the year 2 pair had returned, after the usual mid winter break, by Jan 10th.

Later in the year the last remaining family party had left by Nov 26th. After that sightings were confined to 2 Wey Bay Dec 1st, and 9th, until 3 reappeared on the reserve 17th, rising to 5 from 18th with 11 briefly from 29th.

Egyptian goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus

1 record:

6 north Nov 26th.

A record count for Lodmoor.

Common shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Breeding: 3 pair were around in Jun, but again there was no evidence of breeding on the reserve and no evidence either this year of chicks being brought across from Portland Harbour.

Generally a pretty poor year for a species that seems to be in some decline locally. Up to 13 were present in Jan, rising, if only briefly, to 24 in Apr.

In the absence of any crèches of young birds there were no records at all Jly 20th - Oct 26th. Numbers subsequently gradually increased to 13 by mid Dec.

Mandarin Aix *galericulata*

1 record:

Male May 27th.

Where do they come from ? And where do they go ?

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Breeding: a total of 4 broods is really good going by Lodmoor standards. Two broods were noted early Jly with 2 different ones, of 6 and 4, in late Jly.

Also incl. the usual moulting flock of 100+ birds in mid summer, with another count of 81 in Nov.

Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope*

Typically the biggest counts occurred in the autumn for a species that in recent years has only been appearing in modest numbers in winter. Generally a quiet year.

Between 2 and 6 on many dates Jan 3rd - Feb 16th, followed by a single Mch 27th, 30th.

The first autumn migrants were recorded when 2 appeared Aug 25th.

Records subsequently incl. up to 30 late Spt/early Oct. Smaller numbers were regularly present until early Nov, with single figure counts regular through Dec.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Breeding: the first chicks appeared Apr 20th. At least 6 broods by May.

Sightings incl. female with 10 tiny chicks in Wey Bay Apr 15th.

One of the few observers diligent enough to count them managed a max. of 59 Nov 1st.

Northern shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Breeding: a very secretive species when nested. But at least 4 pairs were around in the spring and 1 definitely bred: a female was with 6 chicks on the Overcombe pool Jly.

Max. count of 65 late Spt/early Oct and 57 Nov.

Northern pintail *Anas acuta

About 10 records, probably relating to 17 birds:

male Feb 22nd.

pair Spt 28th -29th.

6 Oct 2nd, 2 3rd, with probably one of these 5th, and perhaps 2 of them 9th.

2 Oct 31st and probably same Nov 2nd.

1 Nov 7th.

5, incl. 2 drakes, west WB Dec 22nd.

Remains an erratic and strangely scarce visitor, given the numbers wintering on The Fleet.

Garganey *Anas querquedula

A relatively good spring but a blank autumn:
pair May 19th- 22nd, and male 24th.
pair Jun 12th.
moulting male Jun 15th.

Eurasian teal *Anas crecca*

A record breaking count in Oct and a tantalising late spring record.
At least 2 displaying pair lingered into early June, although there was no evidence of breeding. It did mean, however, that the tardy spring birds overlapped with the first returning autumn birds. So birds were present every day of the year.
Numbers, as ever, only built up very slowly during the summer and autumn...gradually rising to 80+ by mid Spt.
Oct, however, produced record counts on Lodmoor, incl. 405 30th. Subsequently numbers fell but remained much higher than average with 280 still late Nov.

Common pochard *Aythya farina*

A terrific year -- both as a breeding bird and a winter visitor with records set in both seasons.
Breeding: up to 25 males were pursuing fewer than 10 females in the spring, which might help explain why one optimistic drake was persistently courting a female Mallard.
The first brood appeared May 27th and in the end at least 5 and possibly 6 pairs successfully nested. Broods numbered 7, 5,4,3 and 3, although survival rates are unknown.
Winter: Dec. was one of the mildest on record so either because of or in spite of this Lodmoor's biggest ever flock gathered on the post box pool. Numbers accelerated from 50 in Oct to 220 by late Nov, rising to 300 by 30th. Numbers then peaked at 462 Dec 5th, with 415 still 10th and 325 30th.
One of the most spectacular ornithological sights of the year.
Earlier on up to 220 appeared late Jan but had moved on by early Feb.

Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*

Breeding: 3 broods in Jly of 6, 4 and 4.
Winter: another duck appearing in record numbers in Dec: 116 on 4th. Still 100+ 28th.
Ever present so easy to take for granted. But not -- unlike Pochard -- prone to big influxes. So the Dec count appears to be Lodmoor's biggest ever.

Greater scaup *Aythya marila

Basically 2 records:
up to 2 adult males and an immature male Jan 21st - 29th.
Male Dec 4th - into Jan 2016.

+Common eider *Somateria mollissima

1 record:
a young male and 2 females Nov 26th. Settled before eventually flying east.
Just 3 records in the last 9 years.

+Common scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Quite good in the first part of the year but very poor later on.
20 on 8 dates Jan 28th - Feb 23rd, then 2 Apr 2nd, 4th, and 5 26th.
In Jly a total of 16 on 6 dates 2nd - 29th.
Subsequently amazingly hard to come by . Just 11 on 6 dates Nov 18th - Dec 25th.

Goosander *Mergus merganser

2 records:
5 drakes flew n.w. over Redcliff Jan 18th.
1 red head flew south, from reserve, into WB and landed somewhere off Overcombe Dec 28th.

Usually only a hard weather visitor, so both records were unexpected.

Ruddy duck *Oxyura jamaicensis

1 record:

2 drakes Mch 18th - Apr 8th.

The saddest story of the year. Thanks to the anonymous so called 'birder' who couldn't resist boasting about his sighting on twitter the news was leaked and both birds were shot -- despite the obvious absence of any females. A salutary tale and a good case for selective suppression !

Red legged partridge *Alectoris rufa

1 record:

A bird appeared in a birder's garden, bordering the CP, Mch 17th. It was last seen wandering under the lounge window.

On the face of it one of the most bizarre records of the year...and certainly candidate for garden tick of the year. But over the years this species has turned up on a few occasions in early spring. It's tempting to think they could be birds wandering beyond their usual range in search of fresh territories. And they don't have to come far...the nearest breeding birds appear to be in Coombe Valley/Bincombe.

Grey partridge *Perdix perdix

1 record:

1 flushed from grass near the cliff edge at Redcliff, Feb 11th.

Stumbled over by an observer checking for the Richard's pipit. Apart from being largely sedentary this species has been declining Dorset wide. So hardly surprisingly only the 4th Lodmoor area record following 3 records(of 8,1 and 2) in the space of 3 months Jan-March 1985.

Interestingly this one was followed by a series of sightings from the White Nothe area. It doesn't seem improbable that this bird could have wandered from there.

Common pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Breeding northern end. Also incl. 1 regularly in Lodmoor car park Oct.

+Red throated diver *Gavia stellata

A total of 5 records, probably referring to 3 birds:

single(s) Jan 4th, 22nd.

first winter Nov 23rd, 27th and Dec 4th.

+Black throated diver *Gavia arctica

Just 3 records of singles, but incl. genuine rarity...a Jun bird:

Jan 14th.

summer plumage Jun 1st.

Nov 26th.

+Great northern diver *Gavia immer*

What was arguably one of the worst years ever in WB was partially redeemed by the genuinely rare sight of one flying north directly over the reserve itself Dec 31st.

Otherwise inexplicably awful.

Early on 1-4 regularly Jan - mid Feb. But subsequently very few in the spring: singles Apr 3rd, May 5th, summer plumage 18th.

Finally just 1- 3 Nov 22nd - Dec 7th. Without doubt the worst Dec. ever. It's possible this could be down to higher than average sea temperatures that in turn affected the movement of fish shoals.

+Northern fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Poor year.

In spring 7 on 5 dates Mch 29th - May 29th, followed by 3/4 Jun 1st and 2nd.

In autumn confined to just singles Jly 28th and south west over reserve Aug 21st.

Little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Breeding: at least 5 pairs bred again. In early Apr trilling or breeding plumage birds could be seen/heard in 9 different locations. The first chicks were not seen until Jly 5th but this can be a notoriously difficult bird to see when it has young. Interestingly a few birds continued singing into Spt.

Winter: good numbers around.. A minimum of 11 were counted in Feb and at least 12 were on the reserve Nov/Dec.

+Red necked grebe *Podiceps grisegena

6 records of perhaps just 4 birds WB:

1 Jan 13th.

2 Jan 15th - 18th. One frequented Weymouth Harbour entrance while a second lingered around Greenhill.

1 Nov 26th. Found while watching the Eider.

1 Dec 28th, probably same 31st.

Great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Breeding: groundhog day. Once again 3 pairs were in territory. But once again breeding success was depressingly low. Between them they appeared to manage just a single fledged chick. Hard to say if they are being predated or just not successfully nesting at all.

Breeding birds return early. At least one was back on the reserve Feb 21st, with pairs displaying and exchanging reed stems by Mch 17th.

Wintering: much better than 2014. Max. of just 20 in WB Jan, but during the freeze numbers shot up to 85 by Feb 5th. The influx didn't last long. Just 10 were left by 20th. At least 8 lingered until Apr 11th, and incl. a steaming display in WB. An individual frequenting WB late May/Jun appeared to be coming from the reserve rather than being a genuine migrant.

Later in the year numbers were really low. 15 were present mid Nov but had fallen to just 6 by mid Dec. 1 post office pool occasionally late Dec.

+Slavonian grebe *Podiceps auritus

Just 1 record:

1 nr Weymouth Harbour entrance Jan 3rd - 14th.

+Black necked grebe *Podiceps nigricollis

2 records of singles WB:

Mch 25th

Nov 22nd.

Remains the scarcest and most erratic of the grebes in WB, despite the regular wintering flock in Portland Harbour.

Glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus

1 record:

2 by Hump Oct 10th. Flew off north west. PHOTO.

Seen by 3 lucky observers, 2 of whom managed to twitch them from the Oasis café!

The 5th Lodmoor record and the 3rd in the last 6 years.

Eurasian spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia

A good year -- probably reflecting the growing number of birds wintering in Poole Harbour. Basically 4 sets of records, with birds present for a total of more than 6 weeks. The early spring arrival are typical.

3 Feb 14th - Mch 2nd, with 1-2 to Mch 20th.

1 Mch 29th.

3 Spt 30th.

5 immatures Oct 11th - 12th, with 3 to 24th and 1 to 25th...and, just to be confusing, 5 again on 16th.

Eurasian bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

No repeat of last year's boomer. Indeed no sign of any lingering birds in spring.

In fact just occasional sightings of 1-2 birds Jan/Feb until 3 seen leaving at dusk Mch 20th.

Later in the year there was a surge in sightings of 1-2 birds from Oct 3rd, suggesting an arrival of migrants/wintering birds. Remained regular until Dec 14th.

The only consolation during a relatively disappointing year was the sight of two different perched birds -- a rare sight at Lodmoor.

Grey heron *Ardea cinerea*

Last year's nesting pair prospected the same part of the reed bed again in the spring but for some reason didn't hang around.

Otherwise present daily and incl. 11 in off late Jun.

Purple heron *Ardea purpurea

1 record:

1st. summer May 12th - 28th. PHOTO.

This bird -- which was probably present several days earlier than stated -- could be both frustratingly elusive at times and amazingly confiding at others.

The first Lodmoor record for 6 years.

Great egret *Ardea alba

2 records of singles:

adult winter Spt 1st. This bird spent much of the day on the reserve.

1 seen leaving the reserve heading west Spt 17th.

Becoming more of a very scarce migrant than a real rarity: annual since 2009.

Little egret *Egretta garzetta*

Like last year birds roosted in bushes round the reserve in late Jly. Some evenings featured as many as 18 birds.

Regular in much smaller numbers during the rest of the year, but hard to come by during flooding in Dec.

+Northern gannet *Morus bassanus*

Notable mainly for a huge influx during gales at the end of the year.

About 30 on 20 odd dates Mch 13th - Jun 29th.

Then 1-4 on many dates Jly - Spt. Sadly incl. a dead bird on Preston beach with its bill ensnared in fishing mesh Oct 7th.

Later about 14 were noted on 6 dates Nov 7th - Dec 20th.

These figures were dwarfed by a late surge totalling about 175 virtually daily 21st - 31st, incl. 55 22nd.

+European shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Generally present only erratically and in small numbers. Most obvious in winter months.

Great cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Ever present WB and regular on reserve, where often gorged on migrating eels. Max. count on reserve of 10 in Nov.

No suggestion of breeding but pair watched displaying and exchanging sticks Feb 21st. nr tern islands

European honey buzzard *Pernis apivorus

1 record:

1 in off being mobbed by Carrion crows May 26th.

Red kite *Milvus milvus

6 on 5 dates, all but one of them in the spring:

1 west Mch 14th.

1 Southdown Ridge/Littlemoor valley Apr 6th.

1 east Apr 10th.

2 May 28th.

1 north Spt 29th.

Western marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Breeding: the same pair nested successfully up the northern end. One of the highlights of any birding year

at Lodmoor.

Display -- as usual -- began during the first mild weather in Jan, with mating in Feb. Both birds could be seen hunting again from May 9th... a sure sign of chicks. The first 2 juvs appeared on Jun 19th (slightly earlier than previous years). Eventually a total of 4 were fledged -- a fantastic success story.

Equally gratifying was the return of at least 2 juvs after their initial dispersal. It was possible to see both parents and 2 of their growing young regularly to the year's end.

The amazingly mild weather in Dec prompted the adults to begin displaying before Christmas !

Additional birds were noted at various point in the year. Another female, with a white rump, was around in Mch. And a different male occasionally pitched up in the autumn.

Prey items in 2015 incl. frog, Coot and Moorhen as well as several unidentified chick sp.

Eurasian sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Once again at least 2 and perhaps 3 pairs bred locally (Horselynch/2MC/Coffin Wood areas). At least 2 pairs were clearly feeding young in the summer.

Good numbers continued to frequent the reserve to the year's end. Prey items incl. Robin and Blackbird.

***Northern goshawk**

1 record:

female south west Aug 31st.

Only Lodmoor's 2nd reliable record. The i.d. of this one was made easier by the presence of the 2 Sparrowhawks and Raven that were mobbing it.

Common buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Breeding: once again 1 pair were regularly displaying Horselynch/northern end and almost certainly bred. A juvenile at Overcombe in late Jly clearly hadn't come far.

Birds that may have been migrants went through on Mch 12th, 22nd, 23rd.

Relatively poor both winters with only odd sightings on reserve itself.

Water rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Breeding: at least 2 pairs appeared to breed again. And that could be a serious underestimate. 4 pairs were calling at duck in late Mch and birds continued calling May-Jly on both the west side and Beachdown. A juvenile was seen on several dates in Aug.

Winter: there seemed to be a clear out during the freeze in early Feb. Later in the year at least 7 -- and possibly many more -- frequented the reed bed and dykes.

Common moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Breeding: at least 6 broods appearing from mid Jly onwards suggested second broods or just delayed breeding. Whatever the cause it meant you could see young birds parading around surprisingly late in the season.

Eurasian coot *Fulica atra*

Breeding: one of Lodmoor's commonest water birds. First chicks May 16th. Provided prey for both Marsh harrier and Fox.

No really notable counts this year. Max. 70

Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Breeding: 2014 was the first year since 2002 that this species failed to nest successfully. So a gratifying return to form. Ironically the once reliable Hump pair again failed to get their eggs off and abandoned early May.

But for once the tern island pair managed to get 2 chicks off without mishap. They appeared on Jun 3rd and were flying by 26th.

Winter/passage: early on there were odd sightings across WB, Bowleaze and Redcliff before a pair returned to Lodmoor Feb 14th. The last breeding bird was gone by Aug 14th. But strangely no subsequent sightings.

Pied avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta

5 records of typically short staying singles:

Mch 14th.
May 21st.
Jly 8th.
Jly 20th.
in off and over reserve Nov 21st.

Northern lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

First winter: 597 on Jan 3rd was a big increase on late Dec 2014. That total had swollen to 682 by 31st at the start of the freeze. In Feb more hard weather immigrants saw numbers climb to an impressive 950.

But as usual birds left abruptly with just 1-3 left by the second week in Mch.

Subsequently just 4 singles Apr 8th - May 18th.

Autumn: what were probably the first returning/non breeding birds appeared 27th May. Double figs were present by the end of Jun with a max of 19 in Jly.

Second winter: the usual increase grew apace from mid Spt, with 124 by Oct 31st, 240 by late Nov and 292 Dec 11th.

European golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria

4 records is pretty standard fare these days:

2 west Feb 11th.

1 flying with Lapwings Feb 14th.

2 settled birds west scrape Nov 2nd.

2 in off and over Nov 21st.

Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola

Just 1 record:

2 over Spt 14th.

Common ringed plover *Charadrius hateful*

Spring: 1 Jan 17th. Then 57 on 12 dates Apr 3rd - May 31st. Incl 35 ne Apr 25th.

Autumn: 16 on 5 dates Aug 1st - 14th. Then 1 on Preston beach Spt 7th, 7 10th, rising to 20+ from 22nd to early Oct. Numbers then gradually fell to single figs by the end of month with 1-4 hanging on to Dec 8th.

Little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius

Another awful spring, but redeemed by a strong autumn showing that incl. one of Lodmoor's latest ever.

Spring: 2 Apr 5th, singles 9th, 19th, May 23rd.

Autumn: juveniles Jly 11th, 16th - 17th, 4 31st - Aug 3rd, 1 17th - 18th, 1 Spt 7th, 8th, 2 9th, 1 12th - 15th.

Kentish plover *Charadrius alexandrinus

1 record:

juvenile Preston beach Aug 3rd. PHOTO.

A brilliant find. Despite the regularity of records at Ferrybridge this is a mega rarity at Lodmoor. The 3 previous records are: Spt 1931, June 1978 and May 1980.

Eurasian woodcock *Scolopax rusticola

1 record:

1, perhaps 2, Lorton VC at dusk Feb 9th.

Jack snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus

2 records of singles:

flushed by harrier Jan 7th.

Oct 7th.

Common snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Winter: very modest numbers at both ends of the year. Max. count just 45 late Nov.

Spring: odd singles to 24th Apr.

Autumn: first back Jly 2nd. Then single figs only until 25+ by Oct.

Black tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*

Winter: between 3 and 8 regularly Jan, Feb, rising to up to 18 in Mch. Later in the year up to 20 wintered, but often just single figures...so clearly commuting locally.

Passage: another truly dire spring featuring only about 40, most of them Apr 27th - Jun 8th, max. 15.

Returning birds from Jun 19th. Then present daily in small numbers -- max. 39.

Bar tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Not a vintage year.

In spring just 13 on 15 dates Apr 23rd - May 16th.

In autumn singles Jly 3rd - 15th, Aug 12th and west Spt 10th.

Whimbrel *Numenius heaps*

Another good passage.

Spring: about 130 Apr 15th - May 28th. Incl. 36 May 3rd.

Autumn: a total of 13 on 11 dates Jun 19th - Aug 31st.

Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata*

A particularly poor autumn.

Spring: about 21 Feb 17th - May 7th, incl. 5 Mch 17th.

Autumn: just 5 singles Jly 11th - Oct 20th. Then 1 over Dec 27th.

Common redshank *Tringa tetanus*

Another cracking autumn by Lodmoor standards. The mid-winter records were also unusual.

Winter: singles Jan 18th, Feb 16th and Dec 6th.

Spring: 10 on 7 dates Mch 12th - May 13th.

Autumn: about 30 from Jun 14th - Nov 17th, with the vast majority, near daily, Jun 20th - Aug 13th. Max. 8.

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Terrific in the first half of the year. The total of at least 11 birds is more than the whole of Dorset manages in some springs.

But followed by a below par autumn.

Spring: singles Mch 30th, Apr 7th - 8th, 13th - 14th, 4 16th, 1 19th, 3 20th, 1 23rd.

Autumn: 1 Jly 7th- 9th, then 1-3 daily to 29th, singles Aug 1st, 8th, 13th, 18th, 2 Spt 22nd.

Green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Spring: 1-2 birds Mch 14th, then regularly Apr 5th - 22nd. A very similar pattern to last year and looks suspiciously like lingering wintering bird(from Radipole?) rather than fresh passage birds.

Autumn: first returning bird Jun 16th. Then up to 5 daily from Jly 23rd - Aug, with 7 Aug 31st. Up to 3 Spt to early Oct.

Winter: singles irregularly Oct and Nov 1st, 27th. In winter birds clearly move between Lodmoor and the northern end of Radipole...accounting for the often erratic records.

Wood sandpiper *Tringa glareola

Two sets of records and -- for the third year in a row -- obligingly long staying birds:

juvenile Jly 25th - Aug 9th and 2 13th, 14th.

A classic pattern of dates.

Common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Spring: about 8 on 11 dates Apr 11th - May 18th.

Autumn: first back Jun 15th. Daily from Jun 24th and incl. 9 Jly 10th and 4-8 Aug through to early Spt. 2/3 to Spt 26th, with at least one lingering until Nov 11th.

Ruddy turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Winter: max. 11 Preston beach Jan 3rd - Feb 17th, but mainly 1-6. Later in the year 1-9 regularly Spt 30th - Nov 3rd, with a max. of 19. Records then became very erratic with 1-7 only very occasionally present.

Passage: 7 May 14th, 7 18th, 1 21st. Then 3 Spt 10th, 12 12th.

Red knot *Calidris canutus

1 record:

1 29th- 30th Aug.

Always a scarce bird on Lodmoor but this was still a really poor showing.

Sanderling *Calidris alba

A pretty average spring, after two bumper years in a row. But a slightly better autumn than 2014 and a rare mid winter record.

Spring: Preston beach and reserve: 1 winter plumage Apr 5th, 2 May 7th, 4 18th, 11 30th.

Autumn: 5 on reserve Jly 20th, 1 beach Aug 13th, 8 west Spt 14th, 1 beach Spt 29th - Oct 4th, another 28th, and on reserve 29th, 1 back on beach Nov 22nd.

Finally, what might have been the same bird Bowleaze Dec 26th.

Little stint *Calidris minuta

2 records:

Singles Aug 15th, 24th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

The fourth really disappointing spring in a row. It seems a long time since you could see three figure flocks on Lodmoor. Wintering has, however, now become regular, albeit in small numbers.

Winter: up to 5 were around erratically in Jan. Later 1-6 were present more regularly up to Dec 20th, with up to 3 lingering to the year's end -- incl. a one legged individual.

Spring: migrants from Mch 11th. In Apr a total of around just 20 on a mere 9 dates. May equally pathetic: a total of about 120 on 17 dates, max of 25 18th.

Autumn: first back Jun 21st and present near daily from Jly 10th. Numbers, however, pretty modest with a peak of 33 mid Spt. Incl. 14 roosting on Preston beach.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax

A really good showing, incl. an impressive run of records in the autumn. The spring flock was also a particular pleasure:

Spring: 1 Mch 20th, 7, incl. 2 ruff, Apr 7th.

Autumn: singles Aug 12th and 14th. Then 3 from 15th, with 5 24th and 3-4 to 30th. 2 Spt 1st, 1-2 to 15th, with 3 9th. Then juvenile 20th, 28th - Oct 15th, with 2 Oct 8th - 11th.

Black legged kittiwake *Rissa pterodactyla*

No repeat of the record numbers recorded during the gales of winter 2013/14. But not a bad year by Lodmoor/WB standards.

All records WB unless stated.

4 singles Jan 3rd - Feb 13th, followed by ad. west scrape Mch 14th. Just 3 more records before Jly, but incl. 6 Apr 18th.

Then 3 more singles Jly 8th - Aug 9th and 6 more Spt 12th - Nov 30th, before another 15 birds on 10 dates to Dec 31st incl. 4 24th. 1 on west scrape Dec 25th.

Bonaparte's gull *Larus philadelphia

2 records of the same bird:

the first winter from Radipole was over the post box pool Mch 27th and on the west scrape briefly Apr 2nd.

The 3rd Lodmoor record, following one in the WB roost Apr 2006 and 1 off and on Apr-Aug 1981.

Black headed gull *Larus ridibundus*

Breeding: like last year 2 pairs nested on the tern island. Unlike last year both pairs failed. One seemed to abandon early. The other hatched at least 1 chick but this disappeared...probably predated by Herring gull.

Passage: juveniles from elsewhere started appearing early Jly. Passage peaked in the first half of Aug with 350 going through the reserve daily.

Little gull *Larus minutus

2 records:

first winter Apr 3rd.

probably the same adult, during gales, Dec 30th - 31st.

Mediterranean gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Another record breaking year. The Nov, Dec counts in the WB roost were the highest ever. The Jly counts on the reserve itself were the biggest summer totals on record.

Winter: early on a max. of around 600 WB roost Jan 9th.

Later in the year stupendous counts of 850 of these amazingly smart gulls Nov 11th, and 950 12th provided one of the sights of the year. Its worth noting that the observer -- a careful counter -- reckons the actual total was probably over 1,000.

Spring: up 50 a day still going through late Mch. Typically only a few records in Apr/early May. But once again 3 birds seen displaying.

Summer/Autumn: birds became more regular again from Jun 7th. Number only gradually increased, with the first juvenile appearing Jly 3rd. There was then a rapid build up with 232, incl. 17 juvs, 16th. 230+ were counted 23rd. Another 162 were registered Aug 1st, with 18 juvs 8th.

Up to 40 daily Spt/early Oct, increasing to 70+ by 8th as more wintering birds began arriving.

Finally a juvenile on 30th Jly had been ringed as a chick at Lancheres on the Somme five weeks earlier.

Common(Mew) gull *Larus canus*

Spring passage incl. 70 on the reserve Feb 6th and 25-50 through daily late Mch/early Apr.

5 singles Apr 18th - May 6th were followed a typical seasonal gap with just 3 singles Jun 1st, 9th, Jly 20th.

Birds began appearing regularly again from Spt 19th.

Late Nov/Dec flocks of 500+ could be seen flying to roost across WB, with a peak count of around 2,000.

Great black back gull *Larus marinus*

An ever present scavenger and predator. Incl. one eating a truly huge flat fish Aug 1st. Hard to believe it could swallow it...but it did.

European herring gull *Larus argentus*

Breeding: no repeat of last year's doomed attempt by Hump. However, nearby nest sites incl. the roof of Morrisons and the bungalow on Hazeldown Ave.

It was almost certainly a local breeder that proved Lodmoor's villain of the year. An individual which had learnt that the Common terns threat displays were just that repeatedly predated the colony of its chicks.

What looked very much like the same bird appeared to destroy the entire colony, taking no fewer than 50 chicks. Some were devoured nearby, other were taken off to feed its own chicks. PHOTO.

Yellow legged gull *Larus michahellis*

14 records featuring about 11 birds. The usual spate of juvenile/1st winter records late Jly - Oct but also sightings Jan and Dec.

Lesser black backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*

Passage: a really unremarkable year with small numbers of migrants spring, autumn and early winter.

Winter: peak count of 48 WB roost Feb 13th.

Nobody mentioned any intercedes migrants this year. We need to try harder.

Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

First Mch 31st. Last Dec 5th.

Spring: average. 1-4 fairly regularly to Jun 20th.

Autumn: equally typical. Up to 6 fairly regularly Jly - Spt incl. usual family parties Aug/Spt.

A first winter by the tern islands Dec 5th was less typical and was probably the bird that over wintered at Ferrybridge.

Little tern *Sterna albatross

1 record:

1 tern islands Jly 3rd.

Roseate tern *Sterna

1 genuine record (and several claims based on a dark billed Common):
1 tern islands Jun 21st, 22nd.

Common tern *Sterna hirundo*

What looked depressingly like the end game. Almost the entire colony was predated by what looked like a lone Herring gull. Will they return in 2016 ?

Breeding: things began promisingly enough. The first bird appeared Apr 3rd and by 24th several pairs were displaying. After two summers running the gauntlet of Canada geese about 45 pairs braved the islands once again... although the RSPB's belated efforts at creating a second island predictably failed. Another example of poorly thought through management work.

But on the main island neither the RSPB nor the feral geese could be blamed for what happened next.

Chicks began hatching, on schedule, on Jun 13th, and things looked set fair.

But then the Herring gull intervened.

It is impossible to quantify exactly how many chicks it took, but over a period of 4 weeks it may have taken at least 50 birds on its own!

The only crumb of comfort were the 3 chicks that -- simply because they were too big -- escaped and successfully fledged. But it was a terrible return from 45 pairs.

Also an immature type Jun 1st, 2nd and 6 west Jly 28th.

Arctic tern *Sterna paradisica

3 records:

migrant by Hump May 3rd.

breeding male May 10th only. A one off appearance this year... after 6 years of trying he may finally have got a better offer.

immature flying out to sea Spt 17th.

Black tern *Chlidonias niger

1 record:

juvenile post box pool Spt 13th.

Remains a strangely scarce bird on Lodmoor, averaging only about one record a year.

+Guillemot *Uria aalge

A total of just 8 birds on 13 dates all year:

Oiled bird Jan 10th - 13th.

1 Apr 18th.

2/3 Nov 22nd - 26th.

Singles Dec 15th, 24th, 30th.

+Razorbill *Alca torda*

1-2 recorded on 4 dates in Jan.

No more records until a significant influx late Nov. Single 20th, followed by 20+ 22nd - 24th, with up to 5 to 28th.

In Dec 1-2 on 6 dates 4th - 29th.

+Black guillemot *Cepphus grylle

1 record:

1 persistently flying round WB Dec 28th.

The first area record since the lingering bird in late Dec/early Jan 2001/02.

Stock dove *Columba oenas*

Breeding: at least 2 pairs again nested in Horselynch.

Passage: just a few with Woodie flocks Nov but incl. 14 east Dec 4th.

Common wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Ever present and also incl. several movements: for example 11,000 over Nov 21st.

Collared dove *Streptopelia decaocta*

Ever present and incl. small wintering flock CP/end of Weymouth Bay Ave. Max. 13.

Common cuckoo *Cuculus canorus

2 records:

Singles May 24th and Jun 17th.

The second really disappointing year in a row.

Barn owl *Tyto alba*

At least 1 bird was reportedly around early in the year at the DWT visitor centre nest hole. But second hand reports are that this year they didn't breed.

Tawny owl *Strix aluco

3 records of calling birds:

Lorton VC Feb 9th.

near Horselyynch May 13th.

near old tip Oct 3rd.

You would hope this is a comment on us and not the true status of Tawny owl ! Surely we are under recording this species.

Long eared owl *Asio atus

1 record:

1 flushed west bank Oct 22nd.

A major rarity on Lodmoor. And, if it hadn't been close enough to reveal its eye colour could easily have been overlooked as Short eared.

Short eared owl *Asio flammeus

4 records of singles:

Oct 21st.

Oct 24th.

east Nov 4th.

east across WB being persistently harried by Herring gull Nov 21st.

Not a surprising sequence of records given the big influxes elsewhere in Dorset. Annoyingly none of them decided to stay. It is 10 years since this species last wintered around Lodmoor.

Common swift *Apus apus*

Spring: First Apr 15th. But not in numbers until May, with 80 arriving 3rd, 100+ 6th - 17th, 125+ 28th - 31st.

More surprisingly up to 1000 Jun 9th, 10th.

Autumn: influx of 80 Jly 4th, up to 40+ daily late Jly. Still 30+ early Aug, with the last 30th

Common kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Early winter: just a few records Jan, Feb and more unusually Mch 21st. As well as the usual spots round the reserve also frequented the moat round Sealife.

Autumn: as ever impossible to say exactly how many birds involved. First Jly 2nd. 1-2 regular from Jly 29th, rising to 2/3 by mid Spt-early Oct.

Late winter: 1-2 through Oct -Dec. In Nov 1 could be seen commuting to and from the Pavilion pier.

European bee-eater *Merops apiaster

1 record:

high flier, calling, north east May 26th.

A dramatic, but frustratingly fleeting, record. Excluding a heard only this was surprisingly just the 2nd Lodmoor record following the first in Jun 1973.

Great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

At least 4 pairs bred in general area. Almost certainly nested Horselynch, CP/rugby club area, 2MC and Coffin Wood.

The most conspicuous individual of the year was the bird that regularly took to drumming on a metal lamp post, as part of what looked like a territorial dispute around the end of Weymouth Bay Avenue.

European green woodpecker *Picus viridis*

One pair probably bred Horselynch again. Present year round. 2 juvs CP early Jly.

Common kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

The Lorton Valley pair again nested. A second pair also nested in the Overcombe/Bowleaze area, with a third pair in the CVR area. One of these could be seen mobbing Peregrine.

Merlin *Falco columbarius

4 records of probably 3 birds:

1 Redcliff Jan 6th and what may have been same, chasing passerines, Bowleaze Feb 6th.

1 Spt 28th.

1 Overcombe Dec 8th.

The autumn record is typical, the winter records aren't.

Eurasian hobby *Falco subbuteo*

A much better spring, but another rubbish autumn.

1 went east Apr 24th. It or another 25th. This was followed by a series of records on 7 dates May 13th - Jun 27th that may have related to no more than 1 or 2 birds. In May it could be seen chasing insects and, on one occasion a bat, at dusk. Then 1 Jly 24.

In autumn just 2 records: Spt 12th, 16th, 18th.

Peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Patchily present again.

Only occasional in the first half of the year.

More regular subsequently and incl. a female and juv hunting together Lodmoor late Jly/early Aug .

More irregular after that but incl. a huge female hunting Meadow pipits early Oct and 1 across the length of the bay Dec 18th and 26th.

Attempted prey items incl. 1 trying, unsuccessfully, to catch Pied wagtails going to roost in Feb.

Red backed shrike *Lanus collurio

1 record:

Juvenile/first winter west side Oct 21st - 24th. PHOTO.

This species is a rare bird in Dorset after mid Oct, so not surprisingly Lodmoor's latest ever.

Eurasian jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Breeding: 1 pair nested in 2MC for at least the 7th year running.

Passage: no repeat of last year's marked spring movement. However, singles Lodmoor Apr 6th, 27th, nr Horselynch May 26th could have related to passage birds. 1 Lodmoor Feb 21st more likely a local on a day out.

No records of overhead migrants in autumn.

Eurasian magpie *Pica pica*

Bred reserve. Incl. 12 together Jan 23rd, 15 Feb 17th.

Western jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Another abundant corvid. Young noted from early Jly.

Several small but vocal groups going over high in Oct were probable migrants.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

The Preston Road rookery appears in rude health.

Potential migrants incl. 5 high north east Spt 25th and several parties over Oct.

Carrion crow *Corvus corone*

Breeding: more abundant than ever. No fewer than 8 separate fledged broods around the area mid summer. Occasionally as many as 35 birds, many of them immatures, could be seen in the middle of the reserve.

Northern raven *Corvus corax*

No sign this year of the family party of freshly fledged young on Weymouth rugby club. Nevertheless this species has become a pretty regular Lodmoor bird ...albeit largely as a fly over. Records throughout the year but near daily Spt/Oct.

Coal tit *Parus ater*

Breeding: growing evidence that at least 1 pair nests in CP...regularly present in conifers around pitchputt and displaying Feb 1st.

Also 2 juveniles 2MC Jly 20th strongly suggest second pair breeding there.

In addition, on Apr 9th, a male was singing near conifers at the Littlemoor/CV Rd junction.

Still regularly present in the CP in autumn/winter and incl. at least one visiting nearby gardens.

*Continental Coal tit *Parus a. ater**

I by viewing shelter Oct 2nd showed characteristics of a nominate race migrant. A different bird along Southdown the same day may also have been a passage bird.

Eurasian blue tit *Parus caeruleus*/Great tit *Parus major*

Both species remain a common and familiar daily presence. For the second year in a row Blue tits appeared to enjoy a particularly abundant breeding season.

Bearded reedling *Panurus biamicus*

Breeding: a pair feeding fledged young May 10th was exceptionally early. A family party of 9 were noted before the end of the month and another pair were feeding young in early Jun. At least 3 pairs bred.

Autumn: signs of eruption in Oct. Still present Dec.

Woodlark *Alauda arborea

1 record:

1 ne Spt 29th.

Eurasian skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Breeding: 1 still hanging on at Redcliff. Disturbance from dog walkers has markedly increased here -- as everywhere else -- in recent years

Autumn: pretty average. A total of around 350 went over from Spt 23rd(a belated start) through to a late migrant on Dec 7th.

Winter: the wintering flock of 25 from 2014 had shrunk to no more than 5 birds frequenting the top fields in mid Jan. None at all later in year, until 1 Dec 25th.

Sand martin *Riparia riparia*

Spring: first Mch 7th -- an early date. Single figs in Mch/early Apr with 40+ 24th, and 60+ daily early May. Numbers then tailed off...before a gap in records May 15th - Jun 14th.

Autumn: gradually began reappearing in Jly, with 50+ by the end of the month/early Aug.

Big surge in numbers Spt, incl. up to 200 roosting birds 6th - 9th, with up to 150 still to 16th. Numbers then fell late Spt/Oct, with the last Oct 19th.

Barn swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Spring: first Apr 1st. Subsequently incl. 250+ 18th, but generally only 30-60 daily until 100+ May 28th.

Nested around Overcombe again.

Autumn: like Sand martin very good numbers in Spt, incl. 300+ daily 6th- 9th. Up to 80+ to mid Oct.

Numbers then fell away but a trickle of records to Nov 16th, before a very late individual indeed on Dec 8th.

Common house martin *Delichon urbica*

Spring: First Apr 9th. Single figures until early May when 50+ appeared 3rd, 6th. Then 100+ arriving 28th.
Autumn: a late rush of migrants incl. an impressive 800+ through Spt 16th, and 600+ 26th. Very few records Oct, with 3 late birds Nov 2nd.

Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti*

Breeding: still thriving. A circuit of the entire reserve in Apr revealed 17 singing males. Several family parties were obvious in Jly.

Signs of a productive breeding season were provided by good numbers of singing males in the second half of the year.

Long tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Breeding: fledged young by May 6th. At least 4 pairs breeding round reserve. Particularly evident in wintering flocks Dec. Minimum of 50 around reserve and Lorton Valley.

Willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Spring: First Mch 25th.

But not present in numbers until Apr 15th. 1-2 to May 5th. For the second year running a bird between Wey Bay Ave and the rugby club Jun 16th, 21st. ...a potential breeding bird.

Autumn: terrific numbers again. Incl. 40/50 from Aug 11th. As usual numbers fell away sharply to a trickle of singles by the end of the first week in Spt, with a late bird Spt 18th.

Common chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Passage/breeding: as ever passage birds began appearing mid Mch, with good numbers passing through late Mch/early Apr. In the autumn 50+ frequented the reserve daily Spt 16th - early Oct, with smaller number going through into Nov.

Winter: becoming increasingly common. At least 4 around Jan/Feb, incl. 2MC. In Dec a minimum of 4 different birds round the reserve.

Siberian chiffchaff *Phylloscopus c. tristis

3 records of probably 2 birds:

1 calling and showing well west path Feb 9th.

1 calling by post box Nov 30th, probably same Southdown Ave. Dec 14th.

Remains a rare bird at Lodmoor.

Yellow browed warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus

3 records probably featuring 2 birds...and the first genuine records on the reserve itself:

1 near main entrance Oct 2nd.

1 nr post box Oct 25th, perhaps same Southdown/Beachdown junction Nov 3rd - 11th

Sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Spring: first Apr 9th. Subsequently poor numbers of nesting pairs..

Autumn: unremarkable passage, apart from a relatively late pulse of records in Spt. Last Oct 2nd.

Eurasian reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Spring: First Apr 8th. Good numbers by 17th. Breeding pairs seemed to be all over the place with many fledged young evident by late Jly.

Autumn: like Sedge a relatively good run of records in Spt...through to Oct 11th, with a particularly late bird Nov 1st.

Common grasshopper warbler *Locustella certhiola

what was almost certainly the same reeler in the area around the end of Wey Bay Ave Apr 26th, 27th, May 4th, 5th. One there again Jly 9th implies they may have bred.

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Winter: pair CP Jan 11th. A red head Mch 23rd probably a wintering bird rather than an early migrant. In Dec male 3rd, red heads 7th, 14th, 18th, with 2 together 17th.

Spring/breeding: first summer arrivals Apr 10th, present in numbers by 20th. Interestingly several new

singers were in Jun 7th. Incl. family party early Aug.

Autumn: striking Spt/early Oct passage. Incl. record breaking counts of 50+ 17th - 26th and Oct 3rd. Numbers then gradually declined to last presumed migrant Nov 4th.

Garden warbler *Sylvia borin*

An impressive run of records for the second year in a row.

Spring: 2 Apr 20th, singles 22nd, 27th, May 28th.

Autumn: 2 Lodmoor Jly 30th, 1 Aug 8th, 9th, 2 11th, singles 14th, Spt 5th. Last Spt 17th.

Lesser whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Spring/breeding: another good showing. First Apr 17th, building up to 7 by 26th and 3 singing through to May 17th, with at least 1 to May 29th and 1 Beachdown Jun 7th. Subsequently 2 pair were in territory Lorton Valley, another nr rugby club and a fourth around the west path.

Autumn: poor: just 7 singles Jly 29th - Aug 22nd.

Common whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Spring/breeding: first Apr 15th, good numbers in by 20th.

Autumn: in common with a number of warblers featured in some striking falls in Spt. Incl. 8 daily 16th -21st. Last Oct 7th.

Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata

3 records of what was almost certainly the same migrant in the scrub on the western side:

Male Oct 12th, 15th, Nov 4th.

Common goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Another heartening series of nesting records, as well as a record breaking autumn.

Breeding: freshly fledged young in CP for second year running. More typically at least 2 pair 2MC, pair around rugby club. 1 singing Southdown Apr 15th was probably a migrant. 1 Lodmoor Jly 18th probably a local breeder.

Passage/wintering: just 1 - 2 regularly Jan/Feb, with 3 singing 2MC by Mch.

In the autumn passage birds started appearing second half of Spt. Even more spectacular than last year. 30+ were around daily from mid Oct, with 50+ present later in Oct. Numbers then fell away but at least 12 were around Lodmoor/CP and another 10 in 2MC in Dec.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

An excellent series of records for what is often a hard bird to catch up with round Lodmoor. The Aug singer is particularly intriguing.

Winter/spring: singles Jan 28th, Mch 5th, 8th, 28th, Apr 1st. The Apr bird was singing in a tiny ornamental conifer in a front garden in Hazeldown Avenue.

Autumn: 1 singing CP Aug 12th. This is arguably the most perplexing record of the year. This seemed far too early for a migrant. So presumably a local wanderer from one of the nearby breeding sites.

Singles Oct 2nd, 3rd and 11th. Then a series of records, mainly on the west path/old tip area, from Nov 4th - Dec 31st. Featuring at least 2 birds/

Eurasian wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

First young by May 10th. Plenty surviving during mild weather Dec.

Eurasian nuthatch *Sitta europaea

1 record:

1 in mixed flock 2MC Jly 9th.

This species has turned up in 5 of the last 15 winters. But this is the first summer record. Like the others probably a locally wandering bird.

Eurasian treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Breeding: a pair almost certainly nested in 2MC again. Birds occasionally recorded almost year round and incl. 1 singing in Mch and 2 together in Dec.

Another bird was singing in the copse next to the DWT visitor centre in Feb and may have bred there.

Common starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

First juvs from May 24th.

Some spectacular pre roost flocks later in the year numbering around 7,000 and providing one of Lodmoor's most compelling avian displays.

Ring ouzel *Turdus torquatus

1 record:

probably a first winter female in gardens Cranford Avenue/Weymouth College Nov 8th - 11th.

Either attracted by the presence of the appreciative birder whose garden it chose or, more likely, by his neighbour's apples.

Common blackbird *Turdus merula*

Remains a very common and familiar breeding bird.

Incl. 30+ in 2MC during the Feb freeze. By late Feb 40+ birds moving through daily.

In the autumn obvious arrivals from Spt 22nd and through Oct. Unlike some years, however, most seemed to have moved on by Dec.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

A pretty quiet year.

In the autumn a total of 14 birds through on 8 dates Oct 19th - Nov 20th.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Winter: early on confined to just a handful of single sightings of single figure flocks. 1 over the reserve Apr 2nd was surely a migrant. Later in the year 14 Lorton Meadows/2MC in Dec was a slight return to form.

Autumn passage: unspectacular but steady. Mainly small numbers going through near daily Oct 9th - Nov 21st and incl. 25 over Nov 1st.

Song thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Breeding: the nesting populations seems stable. Clearly not as common as Blackbird but has nevertheless increased in recent years. As well as the Nightingale impersonator another bird imitated Oystercatcher! During the Feb freeze 12 frequented the top fields. There was also a major arrival in the autumn incl. 70+ birds -- overhead and grounded -- overnight/early morning Nov 1st.

Mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus

7 records of single fly overs perhaps relating to no more than 4 birds:

west Jan 20th.

east Feb 20th.

Oct 24th.

what may have been the same bird commuting over the reserve Nov 25th, Dec 1st, 3rd, 15th.

European robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Signs of another excellent breeding season: 4 different broods of freshly fledged young by May 24th. Lots of juveniles were evident by late Jly.

As usual immigrants began arriving mid Spt, with numbers building up in Oct. Many moved on but good numbers again wintered.

Incl. a striking individual on Southdown Ave with glaring white wing flashes.

Common nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos

1 record:

a singing bird between Wey Bay Ave and the rugby club Apr 16th, and 25th - May 13th.

Intriguingly this bird appeared in the same spot as last year's singer. It may, of course, have been the same bird but, as we all noticed, it wasn't all that great at singing. So it is tempting to imagine it was an immature returning to its birthplace.

It certainly impressed the locals -- one of the neighbouring Song thrushes became quite adept at mimicking Nightingale phrases.

Black redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros

1 record:

adult male Preston beach Dec 1st.

Quality not quantity. Compared to some of those immature/female type this was a cracker.

Common redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus

5 records of autumn singles:

1 Lorton, 1 Horselynch Spt 3rd.

1 Horselynch Spt 10th.

1 Spt 16th.

Immature male west path Oct 11th, 12th.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra

Autumn: about 9. The first on Preston beach Aug 28th. Then 1 Horselynch field Spt 1st, 2 there 10th, 1-2 16th - 20th, Oct 1st, 3rd. Finally 1 on the west side Oct 11th.

A nice run of records and some compensation for a blank spring.

European stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Breeding: returned, after a 10 year gap, as a breeding species. A pair fledged at least 3(possibly 4) young in the gorse in the Horselynch field.

Winter: early on at least 3 Lodmoor and Overcombe. In Oct/Nov up to 7. But by mid Dec most seemed to have moved on, although at least 2 lingered to the year's end.

Passage: a male Mch 14th was almost certainly a passage bird. A male by the Hump Jun 14th, however, was harder to explain. The first obvious autumn migrant appeared on Aug 11th with small numbers moving through Spt/Oct.

Northern wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

An excellent spring and a genuine Lodmoor rarity -- a midsummer sighting.

Spring: about 50 Mch 11th - May 27th. Max 10 Apr 12th.

Summer: a first year bird on the Greenhill breakwater Jun 27th..

Autumn: first Aug 10th. Then about 40 Aug 21st - Oct 9th. No late birds this year.

Spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata

5 records of 7 birds:

1 Apr 25th.

1 Aug 31st

2 Spt 1st.

2 Spt 11th.

1 Spt 17th.

House sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Still thriving Southdown Ave, CP, Overcombe areas. Parents were feeding young by mid May.

Incl. a count of 130 Southdown in Jly.

***Eurasian tree sparrow**

1 record:

1 vocally east Overcombe Oct 13th.

A classic date.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

One of Lodmoor's ever present and commonest species.

Western yellow wagtail *Motacilla flavissima*

Spring: 1-2 over daily Apr 15th - 20th.

Autumn: a flock of 25 went west Spt 3rd, and 55 flew round the reserve before heading east 11th. Otherwise just modest numbers Aug 30th - Oct 8th.

Channel wagtail *M. flava x flavissima*

1 record:

a bird showing these characteristics Apr 17th. PHOTO.

Channel wagtails occur in the intergrade zone in northern France between nominate Yellow and Blue headed wagtails.

Grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Early winter: single(s) old tip, a birder's garden pond and Bowleaze Jan 8th - Mch 9th.

An immature over Jun 7th was an exceptional mid summer record and clearly hadn't come far.

Autumn: not last year's record breaking number but still very good. First Spt 10th. Then incl. 9 16th and near daily mid Spt through Oct.

Later winter: 2 frequenting old tip area, with another Bowleaze and perhaps a fourth bird in the Overcombe area.

Pied wagtail *Motacilla yarellii*

Winter roosts: incl. 150+ flying into the reed bed Feb 4th and 75 Oct 15th.

Autumn passage noted from Jly 26th, with a peak in mid Oct.

Incl. 25 feeding on the beach at Bowleaze beach late Dec.

Richard's pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae

1 record from 2014:

the wintering adult west of Redcliff Jan 1st - Feb 1st. PHOTO.

Meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Wintering: early on up to 40 Redcliff Jan-Mch,. Very few at the end of the year.

Passage: best ever spring incl. 14 north Mch 21st, 15 north 23rd, at least 100 through Apr 3rd.

In autumn from early Spt. Generally very poor. Up to 100 daily Spt 27th - Oct 2nd but otherwise just a trickle.

Tree pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Spring: 1 over Apr 16th.

Autumn: terrible: 2 Spt 3rd, singles 7th, 10th, 17th.

Water pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Thanks to an obvious late autumn arrival probably the best year since 2011.

Early on just 5 single(s) Jan 9th - Mch 10th.

Later many records -- mainly of fly overs -- from Overcombe Oct 28th - Dec 28th. Could have involved up to 8 birds. But very hard to get to grip with.

Eurasian rock pipit *Anthus petrosus

5 records probably involving no more than 3 birds:

1 Bowleaze Jan 11th, 12th.

1 Preston beach Nov 2nd.

1 Bowleaze Nov 25th.

1 Overcombe corner Dec 20th.

Common chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Breeding: remains a fairly common breeding bird in and mainly around Lodmoor.

In autumn pretty standard passage Oct 16th - Nov 2nd.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla

4 records of singles:

Oct 16th.

Oct 25th.

Nov 2nd.

in the Chaffinch flock CP Nov 18th.

A bit better than 2014's pathetic showing...but not much. Probably under recorded in the fly over Chaffinch flocks.

Eurasian bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhoea*

Breeding: at least 1 pair bred somewhere over the western side, with 2 more family parties in 2MC and another around Beachdown. Can now be regularly encountered all year round on the western path as well as up the northern end. Flocks of up to 7.

European greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Breeding: 4+ nesting on the western side. However, strangely scarce by Dec.

Common linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Breeding: about 6 pairs continue to breed in the gorse on the western side. In addition 2 pairs nested in the gorse and bracken on the Horselynych slope.

Autumn: in common with Siskin some good movements mid Spt - late Nov incl. 100+ Spt 23rd.

Winter: 25 in the top fields into Jan from 2014. In late Nov 12 were still on the west side and 20 were in Lorton Meadows in Dec.

Lesser redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*

A total of about 80 over Spt 25th - Nov 26th. Incl. 12 north Oct 2nd and 12 north west 3rd.

One of a number of finches going over in record numbers. And a welcome sight and sound after a completely blank year in 2014.

Red crossbill *Loxia curvirostra

5 records of 13 fly overs made it a record year for what is usually only a scarce and erratic migrant:

3 west Aug 6th.

1 north east Spt 23rd.

2 Oct 8th.

1 Oct 10th.

6 east Oct 11th.

The flock of 6 looks like Lodmoor's highest ever count !

European goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Small numbers breed in the area. But, as ever, most obvious as an autumn migrant and a winter visitor.

Passage incl. 150+ over Oct 10th. But this year relatively few decided to winter.

Eurasian siskin *Carduelis spinus*

A record breaking autumn was arguably the most astonishing ornithological event of the year at Lodmoor.

In 2014 -- admittedly one of the worst years ever -- a total of just 25 went over all autumn .

In 2015 single flocks of 25 became commonplace as well over 2,000 birds passed through. The explanation ? Reportedly a bumper cone crop, which in turn meant vast numbers of fledged juveniles.

Spring: 1 east Mch 19th.

Autumn: birds began appearing amazingly early. 7 went over Jly 16th, another 2 29th and 1 30th. But these totals were dwarfed by an astonishing total of around 2,250 Spt 3rd - Dec 14th.

As well as the highest ever annual total the best day records were also broken with 350+ Spt 16th and 300+ 17th and 28th.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella

7 records, incl. 6 autumn fly overs:

1 calling in the bushes by Preston Beach Road before flying off Apr 5th.

1 east Oct 9th.

2 Oct 12th.

singles Oct 17th, 19th, 27th.

2 Nov 24th.

This total makes it one of the best autumn's ever for Yellowhammer.

Common reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Breeding: fledged young by late Jun.. At least 6 pairs nested again. Territorial males incl. one bizarrely imitating Redshank call in its song.

Winter/passage: as usual up to 10 wintered in and around the hedgerows and fields on Southdown Ridge. What looked very much like passage birds were recorded going over daily Oct 12th - 15th, and incl. 4 east 31st.

Lapland longspur *Calcarius lapponicus

1 record:

a calling bird north east up Horselych slope Spt 28th.

Escapes etc

Hooded merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

1 record:

The Radipole bird flying with 3 Tufted duck May 13th.

This long distance migrant has managed to make it all the way across the Dorchester Road several times during its year stay at Radipole.

Feral/Rock pigeon *Columba livia*

Thanks to the woman who feeds them -- and a thriving colony of Brown Rats -- the flock near the play area is thriving and can be seen every day commuting to and from Weymouth town centre.