

LODMOOR AREA BIRD REPORT 2018

THE FACT AND FIGURES

The Lodmoor area list now stands at 308. There were 3 additions in 2018.

The three new species(if accepted) are **Ross's gull**, **American royal tern** and **Little bunting**.

Between us we clocked a total of 201 species -- the first time the 200 barrier has been broken. In addition 5 distinctive sub species, and 2 distinctive hybrids were also noted. Oh, and Feral pigeon, for those of you who count them.

The systematic list in this report includes birds recorded on the reserve and the immediate surrounding area -- incl. Preston beach/Weymouth Bay, Southdown Estate/Horselynclych slope, Lodmoor Country Park, Bowleaze-Redcliff Point, the Lorton Valley.

The list follows IOC. For the most part I've followed the English names now used by IOC which I appreciate might be a bit annoying(Northern pintail, Eurasian Sparrowhawk etc) but is correct.

THE BIRDING YEAR

Winter(January to March)

Mild, wet weather can make birding Lodmoor in winter all too predictable. And January largely conformed to type. A **Pomarine skua** and 2 long staying **Red necked grebes** in the bay and a **Western Cattle egret** by the Hump provided unexpected bonuses. But there were few other surprises. The wintering flock of 5 **Ruff** continued to delight on the west scrape and 4 **Greater scaup** frequented the post box pool. But to be honest not much else to write home about.

That, however, was about to change.

February got underway with a genuine Lodmoor rarity in the form of a **Hen harrier**. And things really began livening up with both **Iceland** and **Glaucous gulls**. But nothing prepared us for the arrival of a pristine adult **Ross's gull** -- for many people not just Lodmoor's but also Dorset's bird of the year.

And there was more to come in March...in the form of the fall out from the Beast from the East. Highlights included a huge influx of **Northern Lapwing**, **Golden plover**, and winter thrushes, and a **record count of Pied avocets**, as well as an array of scarcities including **Goosander**, **Jack snipe**, **Eurasian woodcock**, and **Woodlark**.

All in all about as good as winter birding gets on Lodmoor.

Spring(March to June)

The weather may have remained cool early on but the birding hotted up with a flurry of good birds in late March.

In fact it was hard to tell where winter ended and spring began when the first **Northern wheatears** of the year appeared out of a snowstorm. The bay played host to no less than 4 **Red necked grebes**, a **Black redstart** lingered on Southdown and the last day of the month produced the unlikely trio if **Caspian gull**, **Garganey** and **Merlin**.

April started brightly with a record count of **Black tailed godwits**, a **Western Osprey** north and an early **Spotted redshank**. Hirundine passage was generally late and poor but most other common migrants appeared on time and in good numbers. Not so common, was a really showy **Wood warbler**, followed by a **European Pied flycatcher**, a drake **Mandarin**, a female **Common eider**, as well as **Western Cattle** and **Great egrets**. Arguably April's most appreciated migrant, however, was an amazingly confiding **Arctic tern**.

Wader passage -- with the exception of **Whimbrel** -- was generally underwhelming and by May you could be forgiven for thinking the best of spring was over. You'd be wrong.

A stunning and wonderfully showy male red spotted **Bluethroat** was undoubtedly THE bird the spring. And it was quickly followed by a **Roseate tern**, Lodmoor's first ever spring **Rosy starling** and the magical sound of a singing **Spotted crane**.

Summer(June/July) and breeding birds

Late June isn't renowned as a rarity fest on Lodmoor. So 2 **Roseate terns** and 2 unseasonal **Great northern divers** appeared to be as good as it was going to get.....until the **American royal tern** showed up, all too briefly, out of a clear blue sky. Just a shame it didn't hang around longer.

Of the birds that did hang around there were, as ever, winners and losers. The most worrying trend of the year was an apparent collapse in the breeding population of **Sedge warblers**. The **Common tern** colony was the other big loser. More gull predation meant most chicks once again perished.

But there were many success stories. **Eurasian reed** and **Cetti's warblers** continue to thrive, alongside many common resident species that seemed to enjoy an excellent summer.

Western marsh harrier again stole the show...one pair successfully raised 4 young. A good variety of waterfowl again bred in small numbers and, last but not least, a pair of **Eurasian Oystercatchers** raised a single chick...following a rare blank year in 2017.

Autumn(July-November)

Not a vintage wader autumn. But generally modest numbers among the commoner migrants was compensated by several quality rarities: **Pectoral sandpiper**, a lens filling **Grey phalarope** and the second **Lesser yellowlegs** in two years.

A generally quiet August was amply redeemed by an excellent September. Highlights included only Lodmoor's second **Ortolan**, up to 3 **Great egrets**, a lingering **Western osprey**, a **Western Cattle egret** influx, a **Spotted crane** you could actually see, another **Caspian gull**, another **Rosy starling** and a fly by **Bonaparte's gull**.

It was also a really good autumn for **Spotted** and **European pied flycatchers**, **Common redstart**, and **Skylark** passage, which helped pull in no fewer than 5 **Woodlark**. In complete contrast it was a dire autumn for **Northern wheatear**.

Another lull was followed by another purple patch, this time in late October. It began with **Ring necked duck**, was followed by 8 **Greenland white fronted geese**, Lodmoor's first **Little bunting**, a **Whooper swan** and another **Glaucous gull**...all in the space of 12 days.

November was less eventful but did include another major Lodmoor rarity: a fly over **Eurasian Stone curlew**.

Winter(November/December)

December can be a surprisingly good month on/around Lodmoor. And to underline the point birds on show included 3 **Short eared owls**, the reserve's first wintering **Yellow browed warbler**, and, in the bay, both **Common Eider** and **Red necked grebe**. Arguably the rarest bird of the month -- at least in the context of the reserve itself -- was a **Eurasian treecreeper** beside the reed bed.

OTHER FAUNA

Between us we recorded the very respectable total of 27 species of butterfly and 17 species of dragonfly. **White letter hairstreak** and **Southern migrant hawk** were both new to Lodmoor. But the wonder of nature is where you find it and arguably the most amazing find of the year -- aside, of course, from the birds -- was **Water stick insect** at Charlbury Basin. What a beast it looked!

OBSERVERS

Richard Morris, Geoff and Sheila Barlow, Jon White, Dave Chown, Paul Harris, Nevil Fowler, Jon and Thasoula Campbell, Brett Spencer, several unaccredited visitors and me.

Daragh Croxson 12/02/2019

SYSTEMATIC LIST

+ all records Weymouth Bay unless stated

* all records given

PHOTO, in the case of rare/scarce birds, indicates a photograph was taken

Red denotes national/Dorset rarities.

Blue denotes birds rare to Lodmoor, but not Dorset. As ever there are a number of species that could, arguably, be **blue** or **black**.

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

Greylag goose *Anser anser

Feral birds Mch 14th, 19th, & 3 Apr 11th. A big increase in numbers at West Knighton not yet reflected at Lodmoor.

Greenland white fronted goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris

3 records:

8 north over reserve Oct 26th.

*5 east WB Oct 28th.

*23 in off and east Nov 27th.

*The birds on the latter two dates weren't racially identified but were clearly White fronts of some description. The original flock of 8 were relocated on the Fleet and joined by more. The subsequent sightings very probably involved some of these.

Canada goose *Branta canadensis*

Breeding: about 6/7 pairs bred again. The first goslings appeared Apr 19th. Minimum of 32 goslings in Jun. Usual autumn/early winter influx of feral flocks incl. 575 Oct 12th.

Dark bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*

A total of 39 on 5 dates in Jan incl. 27 17th. In spring 8 on 5 dates Mch 4th - May 4th.

In the autumn first Oct 9th, followed by 52 past 28th. Then 25 on 9 dates Oct 31st - Dec 31st.

About par for the course.

+Pale bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota

6 records, incl. 90 on 5 dates in spring:

1 Jan 18th.

5 Apr 2nd, 3 15th, 32 17th, 43 27th, 7 May 4th, 8 5th.

Barnacle goose *Branta leucopsis*

Records of 2 - 5 feral birds with Canadas on 5 dates Jun 23rd - Oct 31st.

A hybrid in Mch did a good impersonation of a pure bred Barnacle...but wasn't!

Mute swan *Cygnus olor*

Breeding: 3 pairs bred and were sitting by Apr 3rd. Broods of 6, 4 and 3. Subsequently 5, 4 and 2 fairly well grown juvs by mid summer. But, as ever, it was hard to determine survival rates. At Radipole there were fears swans were being poached. The worry is that this could also be happening at Lodmoor. All that can be said for sure is that groups of 5 and 2 cygnets successfully fledged and flew off Oct and Nov. The other 6 remain unaccounted for.

Winter: earlier in the year 3 ads had returned by the second week in Jan. Later birds were only very occasionally present from Oct onwards and featured odd flying visits incl 6 sw Oct 18th. 2 adults reserve Dec 27th, 28th might refer to an early returning breeding pair.

+Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus

1 record:

juv, briefly, sat in WB before flying west early in the morning Oct 28th.

The first record for 5 years.

Egyptian goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus

5 records of an increasingly regular feral wanderer:

Singles Mch 24th, May 20th- 21st.

5 in off and east Nov 1st.

1 east Nov 19th.

1 north Dec 23rd.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Breeding: 10 chicks appeared May 27th, initially in WB, although 2 appear to have perished very quickly. In addition there were two broods of 5 and 4. Out of an original total of 19 ducklings at least 11 fledged

successfully. That's probably a good survival rate.

As ever impossible to say for sure if all were hatched on Lodmoor or whether adults nested elsewhere and brought their broods across the bay. Certainly raised on Lodmoor.

Movements: early on a max. of 22 in Feb and also incl. 11 adults in off May 12th. Subsequently 1-2 juveniles lingered to Spt 16th, followed by a gap in regular sightings until 1 Oct 20th slowly increasing to up to 10 from Dec 1st.

***Mandarin Aix galericulata**

1 record:

drake Apr 17th. PHOTO.

Gadwall Anas strepera

Breeding: at least 3 pairs produced young... a good return for this species. A brood of 8 appeared May 7th, followed by a different brood of 7 and a third brood of 4 very young chicks Jun 5th. As usual their survival rates are unknown.

Counts: early on 67 Jan 3rd, later a peak count of just 87 in Jun. In common with other species of dabbling duck numbers dropped dramatically along with the water levels during the drought. Numbers only returned very slowly towards normal with 55+ by early Dec. Incl. 1 sat in Weymouth Bay Nov 23rd.

Eurasian Wigeon Anas penelope

Winter: early on a max. of just 4 on a mere 13 dates Jan/Feb. Then, as part of hard weather movement, 8 Mch 2nd, with 1 Mch 15th - Apr 3rd. More surprisingly was a drake May 14th, a pair 16th and a drake 29th, Jun 3rd.

Autumn: first returning bird Spt 5th. Oct/Nov nearly always produces Lodmoor's best counts and 2018 was no exception. A series of arrivals incl. 64 12th, with 50 to 17th, and 47 28th. Then 73 Nov 12th with 1-9 regularly to Dec 4th. Subsequently just odd records of 1 - 2 to year's end.

Mallard Anas platyrhynchos

Common and omnipresent.

Northern Shoveler Anas clypeata

Breeding: a minimum of 2 pairs bred -- 2 duckling were noted Jun 28th, 4 well grown juvs were on the post box pool Jly 21st.

No big counts this year. Max. of just 26 Spt 18th(following the drought), rising to 40+ by Nov.

Northern Pintail Anas acuta

A very good run of records early on but much poorer in the second half of the year. Lodmoor doesn't hold feeding birds in autumn/winter in the way it can Wigeon and particularly Teal.

In Jan 1-3 were recorded on many dates and incl. 2 drakes. This was followed by 2 drakes Feb 24th, 3 Mch 2nd, 4 4th, 3 19th.

In autumn single females Aug 6th, Oct 4th, and 19th- 20th, drake Dec 6th.

***Garganey Anas querquedula**

Just 2 records of drakes:

Mch 30th & 31st.

Jun 6th & 9th.

A miserly total of 5 records in the last 3 years.

Eurasian Teal Anas crecca

Early winter: the last couple of winters have produced record numbers on Lodmoor. In Jan numbers peaked at 400+ Jan 18th - 22nd. 250+ were still around Feb 20th, with 48 still lingering in late Apr. At least 1 to May 13th.

Autumn/late winter: what looked very much like the first returning bird/non breeder May 29th. Numbers stayed modest until 50+ late Aug, rising to 150 by Spt 8th.

In Oct the flock had reached 280, increasing again to 380 by Nov 26th. By Dec some birds had clearly moved on. But counts of around 200 were still regular.

Incl. odd sightings of passage birds resting up in WB.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Breeding: up to 27 drakes had gathered in early spring. As ever most of them remained unpaired. But at least 4 confirmed breeding pair this year. That compares with an average of 5/6 annually. Incl. a brood of 8 May 29th, a different brood of 3 chicks Jun 1st, another 5 young ducklings 20th. Finally a new brood of 4 very young birds early Jly.

Winter/non breeding: erratically present at both ends of the year.

Early on failed to break the three figures mark: max just 90+ Feb 12th. This species doesn't seem to like it when water levels rise sharply in winter floods. Later on they faced the opposite problem: not enough water. Very few indeed could be seen throughout much of Aug, with numbers not returning to anything like normal until mid Oct. In Nov 220 had gathered by 9th. But this flock clearly moved around locally and in early Dec there were frequently no birds at all! A brief influx Dec 10th produced 100+ but by the end of the year we were back to single figures at best.

Pochard x Tufted duck: a very handsome hybrid frequented the Beachdown pools Mch/Apr.

Ring necked duck *Aythya collaris

1 record:

First winter male Oct 19th - 23rd. Later moved to Radipole. PHOTO.

The third Lodmoor record and the first for 12 years. The others were Apr/May 2002 and Nov 2006.

Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*

Breeding: nesting birds were either overlooked or just did badly. Just 2(possibly 3) confirmed records: 10 ducklings Jly 6th, 5 21st, then 4 fairly well grown juvs, followed by 2 fledged birds in Aug that could have been a new brood, merely survivors of the Jly families or both!

Like all dabbling ducks nearly all the Tufties deserted when water levels fell to unprecedented low levels in Aug.

Winter: once again disappointingly modest numbers at both ends of the year.

Incl. 2 WB Apr 5th.

Tufted duck x Lesser scaup: the hybrid from 2017, showing characteristics of this combination, lingered into Jan.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila

Confined to Jan:

Up to 4 Jan 1st - 25th.

A relatively poor showing. However, this species has now occurred in all but one winter since 2004.

+Common Eider *Somateria mollissima

2 records in bay:

female type, settled, Apr 17th.

imm male off Greenhill Dec 23rd.

Noted for the 4th year in a row.

+Common scoter *Melanitta nigra*

A slightly below average batch of records early on, followed by the usual smattering of spring sightings. Then one of the poorest autumns on records.

1 - 3 noted on 15 dates Jan 10th - Feb 20th. In spring recorded on 9 dates Mch 8th - May 29th and incl. 10e Apr 29th.

No mid summer sightings. And a very poor autumn: 1w Aug 12th and 15 Redcliff Spt 24th, but then confined to just 8 on 5 dates to Dec 26th.

Goosander(Common merganser) *Mergus merganser

2 records:

3, incl. drake, leaving reserve early morning during freeze Mch 2nd.

drake Nov 20th.

No lingerers this year.

Red legged partridge *Alectoris rufa

Basically 2 records of what was probably the same bird:

1 calling west bank Spt 28th. It or possibly another calling top fields Oct 18th, 22nd.

Red legged partridge had been reported by a non birder living at the top of Budmouth Avenue in Spt and probably related to this individual.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Breeding: pair bred Overcombe end of reserve again. In addition at least 1 pair inhabited the Horselynch slope/top fields. Small signs maybe of a comeback in breeding numbers after years of decline.

Also incl. a male hanging around the seaward end of the main reserve in autumn and, more unusually, a male on the west path in Nov.

+Red throated diver *Gavia stellata

5 records of singles incl. a rare Jun bird:

Mch 22nd.

Apr 22nd.

1st summer Jun 6th - 8th.

close in Dec 1st.

1st winter Dec 25th & 27th.

+Black throated diver *Gavia arctica

6 records of singles(incl. the beached corpse):

Dead bird Preston beach Jan 10th.

Jan 26th.

Mch 27th.

Spt 26th.

partial summer plumage Nov 1st.

Nov 20th...settled before flying east.

The second above average year in a row for what is normally the scarcest of the 3 divers.

+Great northern diver *Gavia immer*

An odd year. The big counts from Dec 2017 weren't reflected in the New Year. However, another poor set of Jan/Feb records was partially redeemed by a decent spring passage and one of WB's latest ever summer records. Then, after a poor autumn, records picked up again in Dec.

Just 1 - 2 on 11 dates Jan 6th - Feb 19th. Then up to 3 regularly Mch 12th - Apr 4th, with 5 5th. Incl. aqua planing display. Then 1-2 daily late Apr - May 12th followed by 2 summer plumage birds Jun 20th & 21st. Subsequently pretty average: 1 Oct 30th, 2e Nov 20th, then 1 - 3 regularly Dec 4th - 30th, with 4 31st.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Poor.

1 - 3 on 10 dates Apr 4th - Jun 16th, incl. occasionally over reserve itself. Then 5 single(s) Aug 16th - 24th.

+Manx shearwater *Puffinus puffinus

2 records:

2 feeding WB Apr 15th.

1 past Redcliff Apr 25th.

Little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Breeding: once again at least 5 pairs -- and almost certainly more -- were in territory, displaying and probably bred. Birds were displaying by early Mch. Subsequently chicks were noted in the post box pool, the irrigation pools nr 2MC and, very late in the season, 2 tiny chicks was noted in the pool by the Hump in Spt. At least 1 more pair probably nested at Charlbury Basin.

Winter: at least 8 wintered in the early months of the year. Later on wintering birds were returning in Oct, with at least 5 in Nov.

+Red necked grebe *Podiceps grisegena

A terrific run of records early in the year culminated in a genuine WB rarity: an actual flock of Red necked grebes!

1 - 2 birds were regularly recorded Jan 6th - Apr 3rd and almost certainly incl. the bird(s) from Dec 2017.

By the end of their stay the regulars were coming into summer plumage.

On Mch 24th & 25th the wintering pair were joined by 2 other presumed migrants.

Later in the year 1 Dec 30th, 31st coincided with a small arrival of GC grebes.

Great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Breeding: a minimum of 3 pairs nested. An adult was on the reserve in Jan and at least 1 breeding pair were back from Feb 5th and were displaying by Mch 11th. The first chicks appeared Jun 11th. It wasn't easy to come to definitive conclusions but it looked like 2 pairs produced 3 and 1 chick with 2 and 1 surviving to fledging. Unusually at least one of the juvs lingered on the reserve until Dec 21st.

Winter: numbers in WB surged for several winters 2010 -2013. But since then flocks have returned to more modest levels. This year maintained that pattern: a max. of 12 were present in Feb. Later up to 4 were erratically present in Nov, Dec, eventually rising to the giddy heights of 13 by late Dec.

+Slavonian(Horned) grebe *Podiceps auritus

1 record:

1 Jan 26th.

Black necked grebe *Podiceps nigricollis

2 records:

1 post box pool Oct 2nd. Presumed same WB 3rd.

1 WB Dec 30th.

The post box record wasn't quite as exceptional as it might seem. This was the fourth record on the reserve this century.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia

Back to form with a bang. Last year this species was present for barely 7 days. This year birds were present for a total of nine weeks. Basically 4 sets of records, featuring at least 11 birds:

1 Jan 13th - 22nd and again from Feb 7th, joined by up to 4 more to Mch 6th.

1 Mch 20th - 25th, with 3 26th - 27th and 1 31st - Apr 15th.

2 Jun 24th, 1 25th, perhaps same Jly 5th.

1 imm. Oct 7th, with 2 8th, 9th and 1 to 10th.

The original bird in Jan and Feb was heavily ringed and had first been banded in the Netherlands in May 2014.

Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Something of an anti climax. Boomers had apparently held territory in 3 of the previous 4 springs. But this year booming was confined to one evening from what was almost certainly a departing bird.

In Mch singles were seen leaving at dusk 6th, 13th, with 2 departing 16th and 21st. And that was it. Not even any mid summer/early autumn sightings this year.

Winter: pretty slim pickings. Just 4 singles Jan 11th - Feb 13th. Then 6 singles Oct 3rd - Dec 5th.

Western Cattle egret *Bubulcus ibis

Basically 5 sets of records featuring anything between 11 and 17 birds:

1 Jan 11th.

1 summer plumage Apr 17th.

2 Spt 10th, then 4 roosting from 11th, rising to 6 by 16th. Then 3 with cattle Overcombe 21st, 24th and 7 26th.

1 Oct 24th - 26th, 31st.

1 ne Nov 26th.

The autumn counts were part of a Dorset wide influx and Lodmoor's birds were probably part of a much bigger flock in the Fleet area. The count of 7 is a reserve record. Better regarded now as a scarce rather than a rare visitor to Lodmoor.

Grey heron *Ardea cinerea*

Ever present. 1 was carrying nest material again in the spring but there was no suggestion of breeding. Subsequently good numbers of juvs suggested a successful season at the Nottingham colony.

Great egret *Ardea alba

2 sets of records incl. an extraordinarily long staying group of birds in the autumn:

1 Apr 24th.

1 Jly 16th was joined by 2 more from Aug 11th. The trio were almost continually present -- with trips to Radipole -- throughout the rest of Aug, Spt, Oct and, more irregularly, until Nov 22nd. Then 1 Dec 1st - 17th. PHOTOS.

Hard to believe that before 2016 the overwhelming majority of records were one day jobs -- some of them just 1 hour jobs. But even the long stayers in 2016, 2017 couldn't compete with this year's birds, which were present for the best part of 17 weeks. Very close to joining Cattle egret in losing its status as a Lodmoor rarity.

Little egret *Egretta garzetta*

Hard to come by during Jan's flood but up to 4 were around Feb-Apr, rising to 5 regularly in May.

As usual peak numbers occurred in late summer with 14 towards the end of Jly. Back down to 1-5 by Oct, Nov but much harder to come by after Dec's floods, with just occasional sightings of singles.

Incl. 2 going east a long way out in WB Oct 18th.

Also incl. 1 feeding with cattle Horselynch slope Dec and another feeding on the rocks at Redcliff.

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

Another bumper year in the bay.

Gales in Jan produced exceptional numbers for the time of year. Present nr daily through the month with max. of 30+. Smaller numbers Feb but still 1 - 6 daily.

In spring regular from Mch 17th and incl 25+ May 2nd.

Less regular Jly and early Aug. But from Aug 9th regularly present through to the end of the year, when a feeding flock of up to 30 birds appeared in late Dec.

The oddest -- and saddest -- record of the year was an adult grounded on the promenade Apr 17th. It appeared in generally good health apart from a damaged leg that meant it didn't have the purchase to take off. Eventually it was picked up by a passer by who took it off to be hospitalised. Its fate, though, is unknown.

Tagging has revealed that most, if not all our Gannets, come from the huge colony on Alderney, where 8,500 pairs breed. Seems a long way to come for a meal.

+European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Generally a poor year.

Very few sightings early on and only isolated records of 1 Apr 28th and 2 Jun 7th, 8th.

Subsequently a run of sightings in Spt were followed by only occasional records in Oct, Nov before 1 - 4 were regular Dec.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Arguably the most striking record of the year was a pair engaged in their penguin style display on the post box pool in Spt. The same month also produced the highest counts of the year on the reserve with up to 22 birds loafing around during the drought.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

3 sets of records probably relating to 2 - 4 birds:

1 Apr 3rd.

1 Aug 22nd.

1w Spt 1st, followed by a series of sightings of what appeared to be the same bird touring the Weymouth/Fleet area in Spt and early Oct. On several occasions seen actually catching fish on the reserve. It is possible more than one bird was involved. But it is equally possible all the autumn sightings related to the same lingering individual.

Red kite *Milvus milvus*

Becoming more regular each year. 13 records of 18 birds.

As usual a strong spring bias: 2 in Feb, 1 Mch, 4 Apr, 6 May.

In the autumn 3 singles Spt 29th - Oct 30th.

Western Marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Breeding: the 9th successive year this species has successfully bred. And for the second year in a row a pair nested in the main reed bed in front of the post box. Like last year 4 juvs were fledged. The resident pair start displaying early and could be seen carrying nest material before the end of Jan. Nest building, however, didn't get going in earnest until mid Mch with at least 5 different birds still around in Apr...partly because of interaction with Radipole birds.

Prey items incl. the female carrying what looked like an adult Water rail.

The first youngster was seen on the wing Jun 16th...the second earliest fledging date in the 9 years they've bred on Lodmoor. By Jun 30th 4 were flying together. As usual they dispersed quickly and had wandered off by early Aug, although occasional sightings subsequently of juvs could well relate to birds returning to their natal area.

Autumn/winter: as in the spring an often confusing sequence of sightings. As many as 7 different individuals may have been involved Spt, Oct. What looked like the breeding male and female were displaying/pair bonding again by Nov but were still being regularly joined by 2 other birds.

On several occasions in Dec the imm. male could be seen flying in from the east over Jordan Hill returning to roost on Lodmoor.

Hen harrier *Circus

1 record:

ring tail over and east late afternoon Feb 4th.

A genuine Lodmoor rarity. The last was in Nov 2012 and this looks like only the second record this century!

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

A slightly odd year.

Early on what is normally a regularly encountered species was surprisingly hard to come by. Birds were, however, displaying by late Feb into Apr. And any thoughts of a decline in numbers were confounded in late summer when birds seemed to be everywhere. 4/5 still being noted Spt.

Prey items incl. Lesser whitethroat and a failed attempt to take a Wheatear.

As usual it wasn't always possible to disentangle locals from migrants but a 2nd year bird in off Apr 20th was a pretty good candidate for a passage bird.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Breeding: similar story to last year: no proof of nesting but 1 pair were regularly displaying Horselyknock/northern end where birds were present year round.

Winter: up to 2 birds frequented the CP/reserve Jan/Feb with 1 around reserve/Overcombe Nov. Birds from nearby nest sites around the Ridgeway could also be regularly seen soaring over the back of Lodmoor.

Water rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Breeding: at last, after many years of waiting, definitive proof of nesting. A barely fledged bird on the w scrape Aug 14th had yet to develop a full length bill. It couldn't have been more than 2 weeks old and presented a bizarre sight. It, or another juv was seen Spt 8th. In addition up to 3 birds were regularly calling May through Jly.

Winter: at least 5 could be heard early Feb. Later 1-2 were regular from mid Aug, building to at least 6 calling birds by Nov, with birds regularly forced onto the paths during Dec floods. As ever these numbers are probably a gross under estimate.

Spotted crane *Porzana porzana

2 records:

singing male May 30th - Jun 3rd.

juv. Beachdown pool Spt 20th - 26th. PHOTOS.

We'll never know but it's tempting to think that the singer(it kept going all night!) could have been last year's bird back for another go. The Spt bird was, remarkably, the first viewable crane on Lodmoor this century.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Breeding: seems to be going from strength to strength in the Lodmoor area. Never anything like as abundant as a breeder as Coot. However, at least 10 pairs successfully bred in the wider area. These incl. pairs on the wildlife ponds north of the parkride and at Charlbury Basin. Survival rates also seemed relatively good. A well watched pair in the pool opposite the Hump raised 3 of their 6 chicks. And there seemed to be more juvs around in Spt than ever before. Several pairs second brooded and in late summer you could watch juvs from the first broods helping their parents raise their siblings from the second broods.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Breeding: first chicks May 1st. As ever one of Lodmoor's commonest waterborne nesting birds. At least 13 (and possibly as many as 20) pairs had young by mid Jun. And, as ever, one of the most heavily predated species.

A max count of 86 on Jun 16th. Incl. 1 WB Dec 20th.

***Eurasian Stone curlew**

1 record:

1 north, calling over Southdown Ridge at 04.30 Nov 17th.

If you have to be up at 4.00 a.m. to take your partner to work I guess you deserve to connect with something good flying over your front garden in the dark.

A rare bird on Lodmoor...this was the first for 7 years and only the third this century. This record recalls the bird of 2005 that was also identified on call only as it flew over in early morning fog.

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Breeding: 2017 was a rare blank year with 3 different pairs failing. So good to see at least 1 chick raised to fledging this year.

But it looked dodgy for a while. Two pairs, prospecting and scraping in May, never followed through. A third pair on the tern islands stayed the distance and produced 2 chicks May 27th. But they had vanished -- presumed predated -- by 31st. The adults then deserted.

Meanwhile a fourth pair, by the Hump, had also deserted or had their eggs predated. But a second attempt by them produced 2 chicks on Jly 5th. One had disappeared within 48 hours but the survivor -- getting all of its parents' attention -- made it to adulthood.

Since they first colonised Oystercatchers have now managed to rear 1-3 chicks in 14 of the last 16 years.

Winter/passage: 1 was back Jan 10th, with a pair from Feb 3rd. The last breeding bird left on Spt 7th.

Subsequently 1 e Spt 25th, 1 in off Nov 29th, 1 e Dec 10th.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta

A record breaking year for a species that is usually scarce on Lodmoor. The Mch influx incl. Lodmoor's biggest ever flock.

Winter: a major hard weather arrival began with 1 Feb 19th - 24th. It, or another, Mch 1st, with 2 2nd. That was a prelude to an influx of weather refugees with 10 3rd, rising to up to 17 4th - 10th.

Spring: singles May 13th, Jun 10th, Jun 23rd.

Autumn: ad & juv Aug 18th & 19th (these 2 first arrived on Preston beach!), 2 -- ad & juv -- Nov 4th, and, last but not least, 6 sat on the sea off Redcliff Nov 19th.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Early winter: arguably Lodmoor's most dramatic ever hard weather influxes.

In Jan numbers rose rapidly to 1170 by 22nd. Inevitably numbers then fell away, although 800 were still around 28th. In Feb numbers continued to fluctuate according to the weather...with evidence of bird both arriving AND departing. Many, for example, could be seen departing 8th with just 100 left on 13th.

The same pattern was repeated in even more dramatic fashion in late Feb/early Mch. 600 Feb 20th had doubled to over 1200 by 28th before nearly doubling again to 2100 by the morning of Mch 1st...a record

count.

Departure was just as abrupt. A day later just 300 remained. And, with the end of the freeze coinciding with spring emigration, there was just 1 left by 13th ! An indication of how tough it had been was the discovery of 3 dead birds on the beach.

Spring: 1 Apr 30th. 1 May 16th - 20th, 2 21st may have been the first returning/non breeding birds rather than genuine north bound migrants.

Autumn: as usual small numbers lingered through the summer months, rising to 15 by late Aug and 40 by mid Spt. Wintering birds starting arriving in earnest in mid Oct as numbers rose from 68 on 14th to 340 by Nov 9th.

Late winter: numbers climbed from mid Nov and reached 900+ by Dec, rising to 1200 by the last week of the year.

Movements incl. 100+ w Nov 29th.

European Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria

Two freezes in Mch produced classic hard weather influxes:

An early indication of what was to come was provided by 6 over Feb 26th followed by 48 through the next day. The big movement, however, came on Mch 1st when 750 went through. Just 4 were left the next day, 3 4th and 2 6th.

The next influx occurred Mch 18th when about 300 appeared, with 60 more over 19th.

Otherwise just the odd sightings of mainly overflying birds:

1 Jan 29th, in autumn 8 w Spt 13th, 1 28th, 2n Oct 22nd, 1 28th, 1 with Lapwing flock Dec 26th.

Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola

A return to par, following two bumper years in a row:

1e Apr 2nd.

1 May 25th, with 3 26th with 4 27th & 28th.

Singles Jun 9th, 26th, Spt 30th.

Common Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Spring: a total of about 30 on 25 dates Mch 18th - Jun 10th. Peak late May incl. 9 23rd.

Autumn: about 55 birds passed through Aug 6th - 20th incl. 13 11th - 12th. This strong start wasn't matched in Spt with just 6 on 7 dates. Then 1-2 Preston beach on a number of dates Oct to Nov 1st.

Late winter: confined to just 1 Dec 13th.

Little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius

A poor spring but a better autumn:

Spring: singles Apr 7th, 9th, 18th, Jun 2nd.

Autumn: 1 Jun 28th - 30th, 2-3 juvs Jly 1st - 6th, 2 19th - 21st. In Aug 1 1st, 2 juvs 23rd - 26th with 4 24th. Finally a juv Spt 26th...one of Lodmoor's latest ever records.

Eurasian woodcock *Scolopax rusticola

Confined to just 2 records of singles during the late winter freeze:

northern end Mch 1st.

Hazeldown Ave Mch 2nd.

Jack snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus

4 records of singles...helped by the Mch freeze:

First winter: single(s) Jan 26th & 31st, 1 down to several feet Overcombe Mch 1st - 2nd, another Overcombe 18th.

Second winter: 1 Overcombe Dec 13th.

Common snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

First winter: very high wintering numbers for the third year in a row. Three figure counts from Dec 2017 continued with up to 150 mid Jan-mid Feb and 80+ still early Mch. Flushes by the harriers produced some spectacular flying flocks.

Spring: single figure counts were possible through Apr until the last May 7th.

Autumn/second winter: first back Jly 31st. Just 1 - 3 Aug rising to 8 by early Spt. The usual arrival of wintering birds in Oct produced counts of 60+ by the end of the month, rising to at least 80 in Nov and 120+ early Dec.

Black tailed godwit *Limosa limosa*

A record breaking year. The flock of Apr migrants that briefly rested up on the seaward end of the reserve produced Lodmoor's highest ever count and provided one of the most vivid moments of the spring. This species is wintering more regularly and in bigger numbers than previously. And, although the wintering flock never quite scaled the heights of late 2017 very respectable numbers of these sociable waders enlivened the reserve at both ends of the year.

Early on up to 44 (but more usually 35+) were present Jan-Mch.

Apr 3rd was THE day for fans of this species. A flock of 152 largely summer plumage birds dropped out of the sky before feeding between the Hump and VS and eventually moving off east.

Otherwise between 1 and 20 passage birds moved through on most dates in the spring through to Jun 9th.

As ever the overwhelming majority of records relate to Icelandic race birds. But up to 14

Continental(*limosa*) birds lingered mid Jun-mid Jly...presumably non/failed breeders.

Later in the year a flock of up to 42 in Aug had increased to 60 by Spt. Some of these moved on and by Nov numbers had dropped to between 35 and 50. My favourite record of the autumn featured 2 on the mushroom roundabout ponds at the end of Littlemoor Road Nov 3rd. Later numbers on Lodmoor gradually dwindled to nothing during the Dec floods but 4 had returned by 27th.

Bar tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*

One of those not so memorable years.

Spring: 3 flushed by a harrier on the unexpectedly early date of Mch 14th. Then 1 winter plumage Mch 18th -20th & 28th. This might have been the bird wintering at Ferrybridge.

More obvious passage birds mustered a fairly modest total of about 60 on many dates Apr 14th - Jun 11th. Max. 12.

Autumn: 1 Aug 19th, 3 n 24th, 1 w.p. Spt 14th. Then 1 w. scrape before flying off south Nov 19th. Possibly the same bird in off Preston beach and then w Dec 10th.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

In contrast to many waders(incl. Barwit) this species put in a strong showing during northward passage.

Spring: about 190 passed through on many dates Apr 13th - Jun 21st and were virtually daily mid Apr to mid May. Incl. 58 Apr 25th and 1 going over at 22.00 May 30th.

Autumn: singles Jly 12th, 29th, Aug 8th, 12th, and 2 27th.

Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata*

Lived up to its status as a regular migrant in small numbers.

Spring: 23 on 12 dates Feb 23rd - Apr 25th. Max 6.

Autumn: 12 on 8 dates Jun 24th - Dec 14th.

Spotted redshank *Tringa erythropus

3 records of singles:

mainly winter plumage Apr 7th.

Aug 27th.

winter plumage Dec 1st. Later over Radipole.

The Aug date was pretty typical but the others were an odd double. In the modern era this species rarely occurs on Lodmoor as early as the first week in Apr or as late as Dec.

Common redshank *Tringa totanus*

Another strong showing from a species that could once be described as almost scarce on Lodmoor.

Spring: 1- 4 Mch 16th - 26th, 15s 28th, then 4 Apr 24th, 1 May 20th.

Autumn: not quite the spectacular of 2017 but nevertheless a really good passage. The first non breeders appeared Jun 10th. Birds were then present virtually daily until Spt 19th. Max 8. Became more erratic in late autumn but still 1 Oct 4th - 10th, 3 27th, singles Nov 4th and 21st - 22nd.

Common greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

A long awaited return to form in autumn after several lean years. Incl. a group of 3 that, unusually, lingered well into Nov.

Spring: singles Apr 5th, 21st.

Autumn: last year birds were present for just 5 days in autumn. This year there were around for 11 weeks. From Jly 20th singles fairly regularly through Aug and incl. 2 23rd. 1 - 2 daily Spt increasing to 4 by end of month to mid Oct, with 3 staying to Nov 11th and 1 to 17th.

Last wintered on Lodmoor in the 80s.

N Lesser yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes

1 record:

juvenile/first winter Spt 23rd - Dec 3rd...occasionally visiting Radipole. PHOTOS.

No records in 24 years, then 2 in 11 months. Vagrants are by definition unpredictable. But there may be a wider pattern to discern here. For 9 years(from 2001-2009) Lodmoor failed to attract a single nationally rare Nearctic wader(I've excluded Pect. sand). But in the last 9 years the reserve has played host to no fewer than 12 individuals of different 8 species. It may just be a statistical quirk. But that does represent a dramatic turn around.

This bird was first seen going east over Abbotsbury before it initially took up residence on one of the Beachdown pools. During its stay it favoured various sites round the reserve, could often be hear calling and regularly gave excellent flight views as well as coming confidingly close at times. Photos showed that towards the end of its stay it had moulted from juv into dowdier first winter plumage. It left when the reserve started to flood but, as events turned out, was destined to return.

Lodmoor's 6th. record.

Green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

The second distinctly average year in a row.

First winter/Spring: singles Feb 26th, Apr 11th.

Autumn: 1 Jun 25th, 2 Jly 4th, 6 14th, then 1-3 daily 25th - Spt 28th when 2 went high n. Then just 1 Oct 4th, 2 8th.

Wood sandpiper *Tringa glareola

1 record:

1 Aug 23rd.

The second disappointing year in a row.

Common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Spring: about 13 Apr 17th - May 12th. Max. 4.

Autumn: first back Jun 27th. Then virtually daily to Spt 13th. Max 7. Last Spt 20th.

Ruddy turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Winter: early on up to 29 erratically frequented Preston beach up to the end of Feb. They incl. one being devoured by Carrion crows. Last 4 wintering birds Mch 25th. Later in the year 13 were back on the groyne by Oct 5th. Subsequently up to 21, but usually single figures, intermittently foraged on the beach, occasionally visiting the reserve.

Passage: 6 summer plumage Apr 26th, 6 May 26th with 1 - 2 to 31st. 1 Preston beach Aug 24th.

Red knot *Calidris canutus

3 records of 4 birds:

1, still winter plumage, with Blackwit flock May 28th.

1 Spt 2nd.

2w Oct 28th.

Sanderling *Calidris alba

Most records, as ever, come from Preston Beach.

Spring: May: 29 on 6 dates 8th - 30th. Max. 16. Then 2 Jun 7th, 15 8th, 2 10th.

Autumn: Aug: 1 5th, 1 10th, 2 14th, 1 24th. + 3 reserve 9th.

Winter: up to 4 birds that appeared occasionally on Preston beach Mch 4th - 21st could conceivably have been the birds that appeared there Nov/Dec 2017. They could also have been responsible for records of 1 -2 winter plumage birds Apr 19th - 23rd....which are early dates for genuine migrants. Later in the year confined to an isolated record of 1 on the beach Nov 12th.

Pectoral sandpiper *Calidris melanotos

1 record:

juv. briefly opposite tern islands before flew nw. Spt 20th.

This species was once the most regular of the rarer waders to occur on Lodmoor. But this was, surprisingly, the first for 13 years...and you had to be quick off the mark to catch it.

Curlew sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea

3 sets of records involving 7 birds:

3 partial summer plumage adults Jly 18th & 19th, with at least 1 to 24th.

1 Spt 8th & 9th.

3 juvs Spt 14th.

Not a great showing but better than Little stint that failed to put in an appearance at all. Reports suggest a number of high Arctic waders suffered a poor breeding season which may account for the paucity of autumn juveniles.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Even a few years ago the idea of bigger numbers turning up in winter than on passage would have been laughable. But for the second year in a row that's precisely what happened. Yet another really dire spring and average autumn was eclipsed -- just -- by a peak count of 48 Nov 24th. To be fair some of these may still have been birds moving south for winter. Nevertheless the change in the status of Dunlin on Lodmoor in just the last 7 years or so has been striking.

Winter: up to 42 Jan/Feb were a legacy of even higher counts in Dec 2017. 37 lingered into early Mch with 13 still around at the end of the month. Later in the year just 5 appeared to be staying for the winter in early Nov. Those numbers rapidly increased to a max. of 48 but fell back to single figures by the first week of Dec, with none at all on a few days to 27th. Flooding in Dec didn't help.

Spring: spectacularly awful again. Up to 11, but mainly just 1 -6, passed through in Apr. During what should be the early May peak the best count was just 30 and was usually no more than 7. Odd singles trickled through to Jun 20th.

Autumn: first returning birds by Jly 22nd. Numbers peaked at 44 in early Aug but subsequently fell to an average of around 2 daily through the rest of Aug and Spt.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Winter: the flock of up to 5 from 2017 continued to grace the reserve and Weymouth rugby club through to Mch 1st. 1 was then erratically present until Apr 7th.

Spring: 1 Apr 28th - 30th.

Autumn:

7n Aug 5th.

white headed male Spt 2nd - Dec 5th, and intermittently to 31st. Like last year's birds, which also arrived in Spt, this individual stayed into winter. On Spt 22nd it was joined by 2 juvs, and on Nov 20th it was joined by a second bird.

Grey(Red) phalarope *Phalaropus felicitas

1 record:

juv. Spt 23rd - Oct 4th. PHOTO.

At 12 days easily Lodmoor's longest stayer. Often very confiding.

+Black legged kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

Early on 1w Jan 24th, followed by 3 ads Feb 2nd.

In early spring 1 went past Apr 2nd, followed by 8 4th, 3 May 31st.

There was then a very long gap until 2w Aug 19th, followed by just 7 on 6 dates Oct 12th - Nov 28th. Then 18w 29th proved to be the highest count of a generally awful year for this species.

Subsequently 1st w feeding with Meds on tide line Dec 16th.

+N Bonaparte's gull *Larus philadelphia

1 record:

adult winter e past Overcombe Spt 23rd.

If accepted only the 5th Lodmoor area record but the 3rd in the last 4 years.

Black headed gull *Larus ridibundus*

Breeding: the fourth successful breeding season produced a step change in numbers. Two were sitting by late Apr and eventually 9 pairs were nesting. Breeding success remains low. However, at least 13 chicks fledged...easily the biggest numbers yet.

Winter/passage: ever present and the usual numbers on the usual dates

Little gull *Larus minutus

7 scattered records of singles:

ad w WB Feb 14th.

May 23rd.

w scrape Jly 10th.

off Greenhill Nov 3rd.

ad w scrape Nov 8th.

ad w WB Nov 29th.

1st winter in off Dec 5th.

N Ross's gull *Rhodostethia rosia

1 record:

adult winter Feb 21st - 28th, Mch 4th. PHOTO.

Wow. Doesn't really need too many words. It originally turned up at Ferrybridge and as well as frequenting the west scrape it regularly roosted with the rest of the gulls in WB.

A first for Lodmoor. None of the many photos quite do it justice.

((+N Franklin's gull *Larus pipixcan*

1 record:

adult in the roost at Pavilion end of WB Nov 12 - 14th.

Technically this bird turned up inside the recording area. However, it was never seen in the bay from the recording area off Preston beach or Bowleaze, so is best treated in brackets and is not counted in the year total. 2 previous records in WB.))

Mediterranean gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Record numbers of juveniles late summer strongly suggested this species had a brilliant nesting season elsewhere. Generally another gob smacking year for a species now best described as abundant.

Winter: The highest official count of the year came to 1350 in the WB roost Feb 26th. However, one observer guessemates there could well have been in excess of 1500 in the roost in Jan and again Nov. It didn't break any records but watching up to 200 feeding on the tideline following Dec's storms was a spell binding sight.

The roosting birds are early to bed and early to rise. They appear in the bay up to 30 minutes ahead of the vast majority of Black heads in winter and they are gone at least 20 minutes earlier in the morning...usually heading off before dawn.

Spring: big passage of summer plumage birds Feb 18th - 20th, with good numbers to early Apr. Then odd sightings through May into early Jun.

Autumn: birds were on the way back from Jun 11th. The first juv turned up Jly 2nd. Numbers then rose steeply: a flock of 350 incl. 65 juvs 27th was followed by an amazing count of 263 juvs in a flock of 400 Aug 4th. Subsequently up to 150 juvs went through daily in late Aug. And a flock of 51 birds in Spt incl. 41 1st. winters.

Last, but not least, a striking leucistic ad was on the west scrape a number of dates Spt 17th - Oct 24th.

Common gull *Larus canus*

Spring: strong early spring movements incl. 1000+ through daily mid-Feb, increasing to 200+ later in the month with 150 through daily Mch 12th - 16th. Just 3-4 were around by early Apr but these were followed by an unusual run of 1-4 through to May 8th.

Autumn: the summer break ended with a 2nd summer Jly 27th and singles on a number of dates 30th - Aug 27th. Regular again, in small numbers, from mid Oct.

Winter: at least 1000 in WB roost by Nov. Also incl. 100w 29th.

Great black back gull *Larus marinus*

Ever present in WB and frequently hunting over reserve the year round.

Incl. one eating a Gurnard on Preston beach.

Glaucous gull *Larus hyperboreus

3 records of 3 birds:

2nd year bird Feb 16th - 24th, joined by a 1st winter 23rd & 24th. The 1st winter again Mch 3rd & 4th. PHOTOS.

1st winter following trawler WB Oct 30th and briefly on reserve Nov 1st. PHOTO.

In Feb it was possible to see 10 species of gull on Lodmoor in a week.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides

2 records of perhaps 1 bird:

1st winter e Overcombe Feb 12th.

1st winter WB Mch 4th.

Herring gull *Larus argentatus*

Once again local breeding birds predated the Common tern chicks. Lasering them had some impact but didn't solve the problem entirely.

Caspian gull *Larus cachinnans

2 records:

1st year Mch 31st.

juv Spt 9th. PHOTO.

Becoming more regular...or at least more recognisable!

Yellow legged gull *Larus michahellis*

About 15 birds incl. 3 Jly 29th. Single records in each month Jan - Jun. Then noted on 14 dates Jly 12th - Spt 23rd, followed by singles Oct 15th, 16th, Nov 12th, Dec 10th.

A clear peak in records occurs late Jly/early Aug as juv/first winters moved through.

Lesser black backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*

Incl. 8 *intermedius* types Feb 26th and another 5 27th.

This species is often most obvious passing through Lodmoor as a daytime migrant in early spring and 15 had gathered on the west scrape Mch 3rd.

N American royal tern *Thalasseus maximus

1 record:

1 in off and over tern islands before moving to Portland Harbour on the evening of Jun 20th. PHOTO.

A first for a Lodmoor and a first for a Dorset. Only seen because two RSPB volunteers happened to be on tern island duty in the viewing shelter when it flew over. If the news had been put out quicker we might all have got it on our Lodmoor lists.

Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Spring: first Mch 14th. Then regular 21st - end May and incl. up to 11 daily early Apr and 40w May 2nd.

Summer/autumn: 2 Jun 17th and a few daily through autumn. First juvs Aug 3rd but peak numbers not going through until early Spt. Last Oct 4th.

Little tern *Sternula albifrons

7 records, mainly WB and occasionally around the tern islands:

1 Apr 22nd, 5 5 27th, 3 28th.

5 May 29th, 2 31st, 1 Jun 5th, 2 22nd.

As ever almost certainly from the Ferrybridge colony. Newly returned birds in spring seem to like wandering the Weymouth area before settling down to nesting.

Roseate tern *Sterna dougallii

3 records involving 3 birds:

1 ringed bird by tern islands May 16th.

1 Jun 20th 2 21st & 24th.

Common tern *Sterna hirundo*

Breeding: the good news is that birds nested on all three islands and the pontoon. The bad news is that the colony continues to be mercilessly predated by Herring gulls. RSPB volunteers again tried to ward them off with lasers. These did have some effect but a miserable total of just 13 chicks made it to fledging.

The first bird of the spring appeared Apr 3rd but weren't prospecting until 19th. Despite all the challenges in recent years 40 pairs again returned to breed. The first chicks appeared Jun 16th. Subsequently most became food for Herring gull chicks and the eggs a high nutrition meal for their parents. A number of pairs who attempted second broods after losing their chicks then suffered the loss of their eggs. The Herring gulls may also have done for 2 Oystercatcher chicks as well as a number of Black headed gull chicks on the islands.

The remorseless predation eventually triggered a mass clear out of most of the adult terns Jly 27th. The last birds, incl. a fledged juv which left Aug 26th.

A 1st/2nd winter type Jun 20th.

Arctic tern *Sterna paradisaea

4 records of singles:

Preston beach groyne Apr 17th - 23rd.

May 31st.

pontoon off Weymouth beach Aug 19th.

juv. Preston beach Nov 5th & 6th.

The long stayer in April was an amazingly confiding and much appreciated bird.

Black tern *Chlidonias niger

1 record:

1 Aug 24th.

A subliminally brief record. It flew past the w scrape and carried on north never to be seen again. This is one of those species you think ought to be more regular on Lodmoor. In fact there have been just 4 records in the last 5 years and all of them vanishingly brief.

+*Great skua *Stercorarius skua*

1 record:

1 Jan 15th.

Not annual in WB. This one turned up at a time when an unseasonal number of Gannets were feeding in the bay(see Pomarine skua).

+*Pomarine skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

3 records of 4 birds:

1 with Gannets Jan 1st & 3rd.

1e May 15th.

2 w Aug 26th.

Like Bonxie this species can normally be described as something of a rarity in WB...so 4 in 8 months is exceptional.

+*Arctic skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

2 record of 3 birds:

2 e on a completely calm evening Jun 6th.

1 in off, over the Hump and w towards Weymouth Nov 8th.

Hard to say which of the above records was more of a surprise to the observers.

+Common guillemot *Uria aalge*

A really poor year for alcids generally.

Just 5 singles in Jan followed by 1 Oct 31st, 2 Nov 4th, 1 Dec 23rd.

+Razorbill *Alca torda*

Confined to just 1- 2 on 8 dates Jan 2nd - 28th. Remarkably not recorded again until 1 Dec 28th.

Worst year ever.

***Atlantic Puffin**

1 record:

moribund bird picked up on Preston beach Mch 11th. It was taken into care to Portland BO but couldn't be saved. Examination revealed it had probably starved after ingesting plastic which became stuck in its gullet.

Stock dove *Columba oenas*

Breeding: resident pairs bred again Horselynh(2), and at least 1 more pair further up the Lorton Valley.

Passage: one of the best movements for a while, despite the fact it was a poor autumn for overhead

Woodies. About 115 went over during vis mig. watches on 10 dates Oct 15th - Nov 19th. Incl. 32sw Oct 18th, 34n 22nd, 17w 27th.

Common wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Breeding: ever present.

Passage: a pretty underwhelming autumn. Generally small numbers over Oct 22nd - Nov 19th. Incl. 2,000 Nov 18th, 800 19th. Then about 500w Dec 10th.

Eurasian collared dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Ever present and incl. small wintering flock CP/end of Weymouth Bay Ave. Breeding pairs incl. Beachdown.

Common cuckoo *Cuculus canorus

Basically just 3 records:

1 calling Horselynh May 10th.

1 Bowleaze Jun 11th.

1 Jun 14th & 1 calling 25th probably refer to the same bird. One wandering individual seemed to be hanging round Lodmoor/Radipole in Jun.

It's been five years now since any birds hung around in spring

Western barn owl *Tyto alba*

Breeding: the regular pair in the roof space at Lorton VC reportedly abandoned/disappeared this year and the young perished.

Tawny owl *Strix aluco*

Erratically noted calling in winter and autumn and almost certainly bred Horselynh. A young bird and ad were regularly calling from there Aug and Spt.

In addition birds were calling in the CP area Jan, Aug and Oct.

Short eared owl *Asio flammeus*

The first wintering records since 2002/03 was one of THE highlights of the year.

In the spring a series of records on 4 dates Apr 11th - May 19th at Jordan Hill and Lorton Valley may very well have related to previously undetected wintering birds rather than spring migrants.

Later in the year 1 - 3 provided a compelling spectacle as they hunted in the grasslands at Jordan Hill in Dec. It is also possible that 2 high over Lodmoor Nov 20th may have been these birds rather than late migrants.

Passage birds: 1 Oct 3rd, 1e 27th, it or another Horselynch field 28th. 1e across WB made land fall Redcliff Spt 24th.

Common swift *Apus apus*

Spring: First Apr 20th. 30+ daily to 26th, increasing to 70+ mid May. The only other influx featured 70+ May 30th and remarkably 0 the next day!

Autumn: what was presumably a feeding flock of 50 went west Jun 21st. Up to 20+ late Jly/early Aug, with 50+ in off Aug 4th. Then 1-4 through rest of month with the last on the latish date of Spt 5th.

An unremarkable year.

Common kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

First winter: 1-2 Jan to Feb 2nd.

Autumn: post breeding records appeared v. late. First noted Aug 22nd. Then 1-2 nr daily, increasing to 2-3 by late Spt.

Second winter: at least 2 of the autumn birds lingered through to Dec. It vanished during the flooding but was back by 27th and into 2019.

Eurasian wryneck *Jynx torquilla

1 record:

1 west bank Spt 8th. PHOTO.

Near annual but still hard to catch up with.

Great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Breeding: again nested CP, Horselynch, 2MC(2).

Good numbers around again this year, suggesting this species remains locally common. Max 4.

European green woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Breeding: 1 pair almost certainly bred Horselynch again.

Present all year but strangely hard to come by Dec. Incl. 1 Jordan Hill Apr.

Common kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Breeding: nested Lorton Valley nest box again. Pair also reg. present Horselynch area and Bowleaze Cove. Local population appears stable but up to Apr was surprisingly irregular.

Merlin *Falco columbarius

5 records probably featuring 3 birds:

1e WB Mch 31st.

1e Spt 29th.

1 Oct 22nd. Singles Oct 30th & Nov 3rd perhaps the same, and the same as the 22nd bird.

A good year for a species that only ever seems to make fleeting appearances to Lodmoor.

Eurasian hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Slightly improved showing on last two years but still fairly slim pickings. The May/Jun records hint at the possibility of breeding nearby but maybe that's wishful thinking.

Spring: 7 singles Apr 28th - May 25th and 2 Lorton Valley May 14th. Then 1 Lodmoor Jun 4th.

Autumn: 1-2 on a number of dates Jly 12th - Oct 4th. As usual most of them late Aug/early Spt.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Recorded only irregularly in the first half of the year. Incl. 1 taking a Collared dove in Mch. Sadly a dead bird on Preston beach during the cold snap Mch.

From Spt to the end of the year 1-2 birds, incl a juv, regularly hunted over the Moor and incl. 1 persistently chasing Lapwings Dec 23rd.

A pair again appeared to nest in the Coombe Valley Road/Bincombe area and these may have been responsible for a number of the sightings on Lodmoor.

Eurasian jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Breeding: bred again 2MC and incl. a pair there with nest material in May.
Occasional sightings elsewhere incl. 1 CP Jan and 1 nr parknride Spt/Oct.

Eurasian magpie *Pica pica*

Breeding: common and conspicuous. Incl. pairs collecting nest building from Jan and 1 perched on the back of a Sika Oct.
Max. a count of 34 CP Mch.

Western jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Breeding: common and conspicuous.
Passage: 170 west Oct 19th .
Winter: 1150 in the corvid roost at the northern end Nov 16th.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Breeding: the Preston Road rookery appears to be thriving.

Carrion crow *Corvus corone*

Breeding: nest building began as early as Jan. 4 different pairs bred round reserve. First fledged young by May. Later incl. several fledged juvs. play fighting
Winter: incl. a regular gathering of 60+ on Preston beach in Nov. Once again birds could be watched engaged in synchronised stone dropping. Also incl. 2 devouring a dead Cormorant in Dec.

Northern raven *Corvus corax*

Now a regular and frequent visitor to Lodmoor year round. The recycling centre has emerged as a favourite haunt for birds.
As usual sightings increased post breeding in the second half of the year. Immatures, accompanied by adults appeared from Jun with up to 5 birds around in Aug. In the autumn birds regularly joined corvid flocks feeding in the top fields. Subsequently birds could be seen on several occasions feeding on carrion -- probably Peregrine kills -- near the Hump.

Coal tit *Parus ater*

Breeding: once again nesting was confirmed in 2MC and CP. Regular sightings from Jan culminated in adults feeding young in Jun. It was a similar story in the CP. At least 1 pair again appeared to nest in the conifers around the pitchnputt. Year round sightings incl. 2 juvs in Jun.
Evidence of local wanderers came with singles at Overcombe Feb, the end of Weymouth Bay Ave Aug/Spt and the end of Southdown Ave Oct/Nov. Seems to be on the increase locally.

Great tit *Parus major*

Breeding: for the second year in a row there seemed to be family parties everywhere in late summer. Already a common species this seems to be enjoying a population boom in and around Lodmoor.

Eurasian blue tit *Parus caeruleus*

Breeding: once again nested in the metal car park poles. One of many common species apparently enjoying an excellent nesting season.

Bearded reedling *Panurus biamicus*

Breeding: an absolute minimum of 4 pairs successfully bred. One pair was feeding young May 4th, another 3 pairs in late Jun. True breeding figures were probably a lot higher. Erupting flocks of 15 in early autumn hinted at true numbers.

A Lodmoor success story -- the fourth good breeding season in a row.

Winter/passage: only occasional Jan but regular by Feb. Later in the year obvious and vocal through to the end of Nov. Harder to come by during floods in early Dec but up to 8 back again erratically from 12th .

Woodlark *Lullula arborea

4 records of 6 birds:
1e during the cold snap Mch 2nd.

3ne Oct 18th.
1w Oct 25th.
In Nov 18th.

A scarce but near annual migrant. The autumn records fell within a classic date pattern. But the March bird was much more unusual and formed part of a major hard weather movement.

Eurasian skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Winter: no return of the wintering flock of the previous winter to the top fields. The first Lodmoor record of the year were 5 east during the freeze Mch 18th, followed by an east bound fly over 26th, and another migrant Apr 11th.

Autumn: A total of about 790 went over from Spt 24th - Nov 30th, making it the best year since 2010. Worth pointing out, however, that more than half of them -- 400 -- passed through, heading ne, on a single day on Oct 18th. Otherwise counts were generally modest, peaking at 55 28th.

Sand martin *Riparia riparia*

Spring: first Mch 16th. This late first arrival date was probably due to the wintry weather through most of Mch. Rising to 50+ daily by Apr 7th, but thereafter only fairly modest passage with up to 40 to mid May.

Autumn: only occasional records late May/early Jun until 40 daily again by end Jun. Several late summer influxes(see also Swallow/House martin). These incl. a gathering of at least 500 at dusk Jly 12th. Down to just singles by mid Spt. Last, 6 ne on the latish date of Oct 18th.

Barn swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Spring: first Mch 26th. 40+ by Apr 7th but subsequently very disappointing spring passage.

Autumn: in clear contrast to spring one of the strongest and most prolonged autumns for a while. Good numbers of all three species of hirundine in late Jly with more big gatherings through Aug and into Spt. This continued later in the month and incl. 500+ still going through on 23rd and 27th....suggesting either a delayed migration or a later breeding season. This pattern continued with a string of daily records in Oct until the last 28th.

Common house martin *Delichon urbica*

Spring: first Apr 9th. But no big numbers until 50+ 30th. Birds collecting mud May/Jun indicated breeding not far away.

Autumn: birds began moving through late Jly/Aug. But, like Swallow, peak passage didn't come until Spt and incl. a mixed count of 700 House/Sand martins 24th. Last Oct 17th.

A definite pattern has emerged with all three hirundines in recent years. Spring passage is nowhere near as plentiful and obvious as it used to be. Numbers of autumn migrants, however, have tended to hold up better....and, as this year, seem to be peaking later.

Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti*

Breeding: a succession of mild winters has definitely helped boost the number of singing males. This year's late cold snaps in Mch --although brief -- seem to have been fierce enough to reduce the number of breeding birds for the first time in a number of years.

The nesting population, however, remained healthy. At least 26 males were singing in territory in early spring and fledged young were noted by late May and in Jun. These totals don't incl. birds occasionally encountered in CP, 2MC and Charlbury Basin.

Later in the year the number of new males singing -- up to 15 -- suggesting that numbers had recovered quite well. To put this in context the Beast from the East virtually wiped out a number of breeding colonies in Suffolk's reed beds, so Lodmoor's birds escaped relatively lightly.

Long tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Breeding: for the second summer in a row the number of family parties and fledged juvs suggested another bumper year for what is already a very common and familiar species round Lodmoor. Clearly the late winter freeze didn't last long enough to hit numbers too hard.

Willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Spring: First Mch 25th. Better passage than last year. Up to 10 a day late Mch through to mid Apr. As usual

numbers then declined until an unexpected fall of 20+ 29th.

Breeding: 1 singing 2MC May 4th but not subsequently so almost certainly on the way through. No summer singers this year. However, 2 freshly fledged juvs in Lorton Valley Spt 4th implied nesting nearby.

Autumn: first returning migrant Jly 25th. In common with a number of species good numbers persisted through Aug into Spt. Unusually still daily until mid Spt with the last on the late date of Spt 27th.

Common chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Spring/breeding: singing by Mch 16th. More than 12 a day were moving through by mid Apr with good numbers through the month and a minimum of 4 birds in territory.

Autumn: really good numbers passing through, like last autumn. Prolonged passage began in late Jly with 30+ still daily late Spt/early Oct and 20+ late Oct.

Winter: 1 - 4 regularly Jan/Feb. Mild weather later in year helped explain record numbers to the end of the year. At least 9 around Lodmoor Nov and Dec.

****Siberian chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita tristis****

5 records, probably involving no more than 3 birds:

1 Jan 5th, 1 CP 18th, 1 Overcombe Feb 15th & 19th, 1 calling nr post box Apr 14th.

1 calling Beachdown Nov 25th. It, or another, calling west path Dec 20th.

Recorded 5 years in a row. Given how rare it used to be tempting to think it might involve some returning birds.

****Wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix****

1 record:

1 Beachdown Apr 10th. PHOTO.

Even by Dorset standards this turned up on a very early date. A real poser.

****Yellow browed warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus****

2 records of 1, possibly 2, birds:

1 end of Southdown/bottom of Horselyynch Dec 11th, 16th, 17th

it or another Beachdown Dec 30th & 31st. PHOTO.

The latter date makes it Lodmoor's latest and the first genuine winter record. It is tempting to think, despite the gap in dates, that these records relate to the same bird moving round. However, the original bird seemed to have taken a vow of silence and the Beachdown individual, as well as looking a tad brighter, was more typically vocal. So possibly two.

Anyway, now recorded 6 years in a row after no records at all for more than 15 years. The first bird turned up in the same tiny tree that produced one of the 2016 records.

Sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Not a happy tale. Lodmoor's worst ever year was matched elsewhere and appears to have related to major problems on this species African wintering grounds.

Spring/breeding: 1-2 were singing from Apr 5th. Good numbers passed through in the second half of Apr and 5 were singing 22nd. But the promising start didn't last. Very few appeared to stay to breed. Indeed, for the first time ever, there was little evidence that ANY actually nested successfully. 2 were still displaying in Jun but numbers were so low they may not have attracted a mate.

Autumn: the apparent absence of nesting pairs meant birds were only erratically present in Aug, followed by just 1-3 daily in the first half of Spt. Last 29th.

Eurasian reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

In complete contrast to Sedge warbler the reserve's reed beds and edges were once again full of singing birds.

Spring/breeding: the pattern of early arrivals was maintained with 4 in by Apr 5th. Good numbers present throughout Apr with many birds in territory in May. A conservative estimate puts the number of pairs at 40+. First fledged birds by Jun 13th. And many juvs in early Jly.

Autumn: in common with many species some birds seemed to be moving though later than usual. A series of singles in the second half of Spt were followed by regular sightings in early Oct and the last 17th.

****Common grasshopper warbler *Locustella certhiola****

Spring: 1 - 3 Apr 10th - 14th.
Summer: 1 reeling Redcliff Jun 25th.
Autumn: 1 flushed Horselynych slope Spt 8th.

Eurasian blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

An uneventful year until an autumn fall

Spring/breeding: an obvious arrival from Apr 6th. Incl. up to 30 daily until mid Apr. Breeding birds incl. 2 singers Overcombe in Jun, as well as 3 pairs in territory 2MC.

Autumn: returning birds began appearing Jly 31st. By the last week in Aug 20 a day were passing through with numbers rising to up to 40 daily to Spt 5th. 20+ could still be counted up to mid Spt, with smaller numbers Oct declining to a trickle by the end of the month.

Winter: odd singles on a scattering of dates second half of Nov/Dec.

Garden warbler *Sylvia borin*

Second poor year in a row.

Spring: singer Apr 29th & 30th.

Autumn: limited to just 9 singles Jly 20th - to the late date of Spt 13th.

Lesser whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Spring/breeding: first Apr 18th, with 6 in by the following day! At least 1 pair stayed to breed on the west bank with at least 3 pairs in territory up the Lorton Valley.

Autumn: first passage bird Jly 26th. Subsequently up to 4 daily late Aug, with 1 -2 regularly to the last record of the year Spt 13th.

Common whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Spring/breeding: first Apr 11th. As last year healthy numbers in/passing through by late Apr. Just 3 birds singing in Jun and breeding numbers appeared down, although 4 pairs were feeding young in gorse and scrub in the Horselynych area. Over the years much of this species favourite habitat has been grubbed up.

Autumn: migrants appearing from Jly 26th. Slow start to passage but -- by Lodmoor standards -- good numbers later on incl. up to 20 a day the last week in Aug. Smaller numbers into Spt with the last 28th.

Common firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

A run of records in Dec 2017 probably explains the series of sightings of at least 2, and possibly as many as 5, different birds Jan 1st - Mch 15th. Some of the Mch sightings, of course, may have related to spring migrants rather than the wintering birds.

Subsequently, however, returned to its usual status of very scarce with just 1 autumn sighting Nov 18th.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Breeding: at least 2 pairs in territory 2MC, with at least another 2 pairs nesting in CP. In addition 1 was singing in the conifers again by Weymouth Rugby Club. For the second spring running a bird was singing on Beachdown for a week in spring, although there was no definitive evidence it bred. Intriguingly another was singing along the west path in mid May.

Passage/wintering: early on rather thin on the ground with just 3 - 4 around in Feb. The first autumn migrant appeared Spt 30th. But passage was generally really poor. By Nov/Dec up to 6 were dotted round the reserve

Eurasian wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Breeding: another good year.

Winter: generally mild weather meant there appeared to be healthy numbers around.

Eurasian nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

Usually only a rare and erratic visitor to Lodmoor area. But for second year running a series of records strongly suggests breeding not far away.

Sightings began with a juv/first winter in a mixed flock in 2MC Aug 1st.

Subsequently an adult hung around gardens at the end of Brackendown and Horselynych on many dates Aug 12th - late Oct.

In addition 1 was calling on the junction of Coombe Valley and Littlemoor Roads Aug 23rd.

Eurasian treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Breeding: regular sightings 2MC and CP have long implied breeding in both locations. This year, provided definitive evidence in 2MC in the form of a pair displaying and exchanging a feather in Apr followed by adults feeding at least 2 fledged young in Jun.

One at the end of Southdown Dec 20th was probably just a local wanderer but was nevertheless an extreme rarity on the reserve itself.

Common starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Ever present and conspicuous. What looked very much like migrants incl. 150+ n Oct 28th.

The roost peaked in late winter when 7,000 gathered at dusk Mch 24th. In the autumn murmurations, featuring about 1,000 birds, built up in Oct/early Nov but subsequently petered out.

Rosy starling *Sturnus roseus

2 records:

1st summer Southdown Ave. May 26th.

juvenile with Starlings Hump Spt 21st.

Lodmoor's 7th & 8th records -- all but one of them this century. The May bird was the first in spring.

Ring ouzel *Turdus torquatus

1 record:

1 west bank Oct 19th.

The second poor autumn in a row. To be fair Lodmoor isn't classic ouzel habitat.

Common blackbird *Turdus merula*

Breeding: Common and as widespread as ever.

Autumn/winter: obvious migrants began turning up Oct 15th, building up to big arrivals of 50+ 30th. During the first half of Nov up to 80/day could be counted in the wider area. Many of these birds, however, had moved on for the winter by later in Dec.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

One of the best years on record. Two cold snaps in Mch were tough on Fieldfares but provided compelling spectacles for birders. And later in the year autumn passage was the heaviest for many years.

Winter/Spring: the first March freeze produced an overhead movement of 400+ nw 1st, and 526, incl. many clearly starving birds 2nd. Most had moved on by the next day.

The second Arctic blast saw about 900 appear Mch 18th, with 100+ still 19th. Once again, though, most birds moved through very quickly...by 21st there was just 1!

Autumn/Winter: the event of the season was a count of about 200 each of Fieldfare and Redwing going north early morning Nov 18th. This movement was part of a generally pronounced passage featuring a total of about 150 over during daylight hours between Oct 18th - Nov 26th.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Early winter/spring: most notable for several huge hard weather movements(see Fieldfare/Song thrush).

These incl. 2,500 Mch 2nd, followed by about 3,250 18th. Initially logged going nw most switched to moving east when the weather cleared. About 400 hung around to 19th and at least 200 20th.

Regular wintering numbers were much more modest. Up to 21 frequented CP Jan/Feb, with 7 still there Mch 27th.

Autumn/winter: strong passage. About 200 went over in a single morning Nov 18th. And at total of at least 600 more went over during daylight hours on a number of dates from Oct 8th well into Dec. Peak vis. migging occurred in Nov but a feature of the autumn was a number of late migrants: 29 went e Dec 14th.

Song thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Breeding: the local population continue to go from strength to strength. Fledged young by late May. At least 3 breeding pairs 2MC, 2 CP, 4 in territory round reserve, 2 Overcombe and 2 more Horselynych area.

Winter: a spectacular influx along with other thrushes incl. about 2,500 -- with Redwings -- Mch 2nd. A

freshly dead bird that day was almost certainly just one of many victims of the tough conditions.

Mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Early winter/spring: up to 4 were irregularly present in the CP area Jan to Apr 3rd. They may explain a fly over Feb 4th, but birds going east Mch 2nd, 4th & 6th could also have been genuine hard weather migrants. Autumn/winter: singles Oct 10th, n 29th, e Nov 26th.

Spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

By Lodmoor standards the third really good autumn in the last 5 years. A total of 17 birds on 12 dates Aug 14th - Spt 16th. Max 3 Aug 29th.

European robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Breeding: feeding young mid May. Subsequently very good numbers, although nesting may have been put back a little judging by the unusual number of fairly recently fledged birds in Spt. Autumn: usual arrival of autumn migrants from Spt...if only in unremarkable numbers.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica

1 record:

red spotted male Beachdown May 14th. PHOTO.

Fantastic views of a fantastic bird before the crowds arrived. One of THE birds of the Lodmoor year. The 7th Lodmoor record, the first this century and only the 2nd ever spring record.

European pied flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca

2 records of 5 birds:

imm male Apr 11th.

4 Aug 4th, with at least 1 to 5th.

A rare bird at Lodmoor in spring.

Black redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros

1 record:

female type in gardens Southdown Ave. Mch 25th - Apr 11th.

This is a near annual visitor, so it is a bit surprising that this is the first one to hang around for 8 years.

Common redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Best year since 2010. 9 records of a minimum of 10 birds:

Spring:

single males Apr 11th, 14th.

Autumn:

male Aug 24th with 2 25th & imm male Aug 27th - 31st.

1 Spt 2nd & 3 4th.

female/imm Spt 13th.

female Oct 15th.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra

In contrast to the previous species another poor year.

5 records of singles:

Aug 30th, Spt 3rd, 5th, 23rd, Preston beach Oct 14th.

European stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Breeding: no sign of breeding on or around Lodmoor this year. Nearby 1 pair were in territory around Bowleaze/Riviera.

Passage: in the spring singles Mch 15th, 20th. The autumn began with 3 Spt 2nd. 2/3 around by late Spt with up to 6 around daily throughout Oct/early Nov.

Winter: up to 6 were wintering in Jan incl. 2 regularly Overcombe. But they made themselves scarce during the freeze Feb/Mch. Later in the year 2/4 lingered into Nov/Dec.

Northern wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

One of the poorest springs on record.

Spring: began with 3 in the snow Mch 18th. Subsequently just 26 to May 21st. Nearly half of those were on a single day May 6th. 1 on a birder's patio Apr 27th was an unexpected garden bird.

Autumn: better than 2017 but not by much. A meagre total of 24 Aug 11th - Spt 23rd.

House sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Breeding: the Southdown Avenue colony is still thriving. A roving flock of up to 70 birds frequented the housing estate and the edge of the reserve in late summer/early autumn.

In addition a gang of at least 20 birds frequented the rugby club/Monmouth Ave area, another colony are established around Overcombe with another 20+ around Jordan Hill.

They are doubtless benefiting from the increasing number of people putting out feeders in winter.

Eurasian tree sparrow *Passer montanus

1 record:

In Spt 26th.

Almost annual.

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

Remains an abundant resident.

Western yellow wagtail *Motacilla flavissima*

Spring: singles over Apr 28th, May 5th.

Autumn: first Aug 5th. The start of one of the better passages for a while. Virtually daily from Aug 22nd with numbers building up to a max. of 165+ roosting on the reserve by Spt 2nd. Between 5 and 50 birds could be counted daily through much of Spt incl. a number of grounded birds with the cattle. Last Spt 30th.

Grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Early winter: 1 -2 birds around erratically Jan/Feb.

Autumn: 1 north Jly 5th was unseasonably early. Passage really got underway from Aug 23rd. And, like Yellow wag, enjoyed one of the best autumns for a while. Birds going over near daily from Aug 30th through to Oct. Incl. up to 6 a day mid Spt.

Second winter: odd records of singles late Oct/Nov may have been over wintering. Then 1 - 2 fairly regularly Dec.

Pied wagtail *Motacilla yarely*

In the autumn an obvious passage second half Spt/Oct coincided with at least 250+ roosting on the reserve.

Obvious migrants incl. 100+ ne Oct 18th.

Alba(White) wagtail: 4 singles Mch 24th - Apr 13th.

Meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Winter: another species caught out by the Beast from the East in Mch. Starving birds were evident foraging in the middle of Preston Road Mch 1st, 2nd. Then 800 went through 18th with 300 still the next day.

Goodness knows how many perished.

Later in the year only very modest numbers around the reserve and Horselynych slope.

Spring: confined to 8 over Apr 11th, 2 over 20th.....a complete contrast to last year's spring spectacular.

Autumn: 1 went over Jly 25th but marked movement didn't begin until early Spt, accelerating to 500+ w 22nd, 300+ 24th, with about 100 off passage birds hanging around in Oct.

Tree pipit *Anthus trivialis*

Better than the last few year...but not by much and none at all in the spring.

Autumn: 12 on 9 dates Aug 23rd - Spt 13th. All overhead.

Water pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Not a vintage year.

Early winter: up to 4, but usually only 1 - 2 (and sometimes none at all) Jan/Feb. At least 1 lingered into

Mch but no late stayers this year: last of the spring Mch 18th.

Late winter: similar story really. 1 - 2 irregularly present, mainly Overcombe, from mid Nov into Dec but hard to come by during Dec's floods. Clearly the wrong kind of water for Water pipit.

Eurasian rock pipit *Anthus petrosus*

Now becoming established as an occasional but annual visitor(probably from Nothe) to Preston beach. Singles Mch 18th, the unexpected date of Aug 9th, and, more typically, Oct 17th, Nov 5th.

Common chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

An ordinary year saved by an extraordinary autumn count.

Breeding: reduced to just 2 pair in territory round the reserve with at least 1 more CP and 1-2 2MC.

Passage/wintering: really poor numbers at both the beginning and end of the year. But some compensation provided by one of the better autumn movements. Passage noted from early Oct and incl. 128 ne 18th, followed by an amazing 600+ e Nov 18th, surely Lodmoor's highest ever day count.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla

14 overhead migrants on 8 dates is almost certainly an underestimate of the actual number of (non calling)birds going over undetected in Chaffinch, flocks:

1 Spt 18th, 3 ne Oct 18th, 1 19th, 1 27th, 2 ne Nov 16th, 3 e 18th, 2 ne 19th, 1 22nd.

The Spt record was exceptionally early,

Grounded birds are few and far between round Lodmoor. So 1 visiting feeders in a birder's garden Nov 19th was a good record.

Eurasian bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhoea*

Breeding: now as regular as a resident/breeding species as Chaffinch. Up to 8 birds could be regularly noted down the west side where at least 2 pair bred. Freshly fledged young late Aug. This pretty finch was present almost daily year round.

In addition at least 3 more pairs bred up the Lorton Valley/2MC.

European greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Breeding: about 4 pairs were displaying/nest building once again in spring. Breeding birds seem to be confined to the west bank but appear to be doing fine.

Winter: up to 12 birds were around in Jan, subsequently in Dec and were probably part of a resident flock.

Common linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Breeding: 4/5 pairs again nested in the gorse on the west bank once again. In addition at least 2 pair bred in the gorse on the Horselynch slope.

Autumn: movement didn't really get underway until early Oct and incl. 200+ ne 18th.

Winter: two isolated records on west side early on: 9 Jan 24th and 4 Feb 23rd - 28th. Later in the year 9 went to roost at the northern end Nov 30th, and 4 were on the west bank Dec 7th.

Lesser redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*

2018 was always going to be a bit of a let down after 2017's record breaking numbers. But this was, nevertheless, another good autumn by Lodmoor standards.

A total of 20 went over on 8 dates Spt 24th - Nov 3rd....the vast majority of these in the second half of Oct.

Red crossbill *Loxia curvirostra

2 records of singles:

n Aug 10th.

e Oct 25th.

European goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Breeding: several pairs again appeared to breed.

Passage/winter: a flock of around 40 birds frequented the Overcombe end early and late in the year. But, like Chaffinch, wintering numbers seemed low. Autumn passage extended from early Oct to late Nov and seemed pretty routine. Peak count of 200e Nov 18th.

Eurasian siskin *Carduelis spinus*

No spring records this year but three entirely unexpected Jan/Feb records and one of the better autumns. Winter: 3 Jan 3rd, 5 ne 13th, 1w Feb 17th. Its not clear where these isolated winter birds are coming from or going to !

Autumn: about 370 Spt 11th - Dec 9th. There were two distinct peaks this year: one in late Spt and the other in the second half of Oct. Highest day counts: 41 Spt 28th, 46 ne Oct 18th. As good as vis migging was it fell a long way short of 2015 when you could count 350 in a single day!

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Winter: no repeat of the bunting fest that featured 30 birds that spent the early months of 2017 in the stubble field at the top of Southdown Ridge. However the same field and hedgerow did produce 2 Jan 5th and 1 19th. Later in the year 7 were present there Nov 25th. 1 over Lodmoor Dec 23rd may have also come from there.

Passage: singles over Spt 28th, Oct 16th, 24th, 2 Nov 15th.

Ortolan *Emberiza hortulana

1 record:

1 n calling Sep 4th.

Appears to be only Lodmoor's 2nd ever record(following 1 Spt 6th 1983). Three quarters of Dorset's records occur on Portland, so you'd think there's always potential for more on or over Lodmoor.

Little bunting *Emberiza pusilla

1 record:

1 perched and then n Oct 27th.

If accepted a first for Lodmoor. Unlike Ortolan remains a fairly rare bird in Dorset...even on Portland, although ironically a confiding long stayer turned up there just a few weeks after this brief visitor graced Lodmoor.

Common reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Breeding: singing by the end of Jan. Surprisingly the cold snap in Mch didn't appear to damage this species breeding prospects. At least 7 pairs were in territory and probably nested. Fledged young were around from late May and one brood of scarcely fledged birds ended up grovelling round the west path in Jun. Their fate was unknown but, like last year, the number of juveniles bodes well for their future on Lodmoor.

Winter: incl. 30+ top fields Nov 25th. This flock appears to be additional to the 15+ birds that could be counted elsewhere round the reserve and surrounding fields in winter.

Passage: as ever often impossible while vis migging from Southdown Ridge to distinguish wandering locals from migrants. But 5 high ne Oct 18th looked like they had somewhere else to go.

ESCAPES etc

Feral pigeon *Columba livia*

MAMMALS

Sika deer *Cervus nippon*

Becoming established on Lodmoor. Up to 8 frequented mainly the Overcombe end of the reserve.

Roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Incl. a young stag doing its Bambiesque pronging display.

European water vole *Arvicola amphibious*

Sadly confined to a corpse w path Feb 25th.

+ Common noctule bat *Nyctalus noctula*, Badger(*Meles meles*), Grey squirrel(*Sciurus carolinensis*), Red Fox(*Vulpes vulpes*), Grey seal, Rabbit(*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Stoat(*Mustela erminea*), Weasel(*Mustela nivalis*), Brown rat *Rattus norvegicus*, and various unidentified mice/shrews etc and pipistrelle sp.

BUTTERFLIES

Large skipper	<i>Ochlodes venata</i>	Lulworth skipper	<i>Thymelius acteon</i>
Small skipper	<i>Thymelius sylvestris</i>		
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	Clouded yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>
Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Green veined white	<i>Pieris napi</i>
Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	Orange tip	<i>Anthocaris cardemines</i>
Brown argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	Common blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>
Holly blue	<i>Celastina argiolus</i>	Small blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>
Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>	Painted lady	<i>Cynthia cardui</i>
Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>	Red admiral	<i>Venessa atalanta</i>
Small tortoiseshell	<i>Alais urticae</i>		
Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	Marbled white	<i>Melanagia galathea</i>
Meadow brown	<i>Manida jurtina</i>	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>
Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		
Wall brown	<i>Lasiommata megara</i>	Speckled wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>
White letter hairstreak	<i>Strymonidia v-album</i>		
Small copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>		

The Lepidoptera highlight of the year was undoubtedly Lodmoor's first record of **White letter hairstreak** -- photographed on one of the wildlife sign posts Jly 6th.

A total of 27 sp. were recorded. **Lulworth skipper** was confined to Redcliff, **Brown argus** and **Marbled white** to Lorton Meadows.

In addition **Adonis blue**(*Lysandra bellergus*) was recorded just outside the recording area on the wild flower slope alongside Weymouth relief road.

On the debit side several people remarked on how few **Small tortoiseshells** were about this year.

ODONATA

Southern migrant hawker	<i>Aeshna affinis</i>	Southern hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>
Migrant hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Emperor dragonfly	<i>Anax imperator</i>
Hairy dragonfly	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>	Banded demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>
Beautiful demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>		
Large red damselfly(Redcliff)	<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>		
Small red eyed damselfly	<i>Erythomma najas</i>	Emerald damselfly	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>
Common blue damselfly	<i>Emallagma cyathigerum</i>		
Blue tailed damselfly	<i>Ischura elegans</i>	Broad bodied chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>
Four spotted chaser	<i>Libellula quadrimaculata</i>		
Black tailed skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>		
Ruddy darter	<i>Sympetrum sanguineum</i>	Common darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>

The **Southern migrant hawker** -- photographed on Aug 6th -- was a first for Lodmoor. But it was only one of a number of dragonfly highlights. Another was the discovery of colony of **Small red eyed damselflies** at Charlbury Basin and **Emerald damselflies** in the Lorton Valley irrigation ponds.

OTHER CRITTERS

Ocean sun fish *Mola mola*

Another addition to the Lodmoor area list! There were 2 records of a species that was probably attracted to an influx of jellyfish which it feeds on. The first was out in the bay Jun 6th. But the second was photographed almost on the tide line along Preston beach by two dog walkers late Jly/early Aug.

Tub gurnard *Chelidonichthys uscerna*

These prehistoric looking fish could be regularly encountered lurking round the sluice outfall. The ecosystem there also attracted **Wrasse** sp. as well as what looked like **Whiting**.

Thick lipped mullet

As ever big shoals sporadically appeared in the sluice. This year they attracted the attention of enterprising fishermen who brought a huge metal net and a ladder to catch them!

Water stick insect *Ranatra linearis*

Another wonderful discovery from Charlbury Basin in Jun.

Narrow bordered five spot burnet

Charlbury Basin strikes again.

+ **Slow worm**(*Anguis fragilis*), **Grass snake**(*Natrix natrix*) , **Hornet**