

# LODMOOR AREA REPORT 2020

Collectively a total of 191 species were recorded. There were no new birds for Lodmoor, so the area list remains at 308. There were, however, two seconds: A much appreciated **Squacco heron** and a **Long tailed skua**. In addition there were two new breeding records: Mediterranean gull and Willow warbler. And a new dragonfly: **Green eyed hawkler**.

Arguably the most significant event of the year was man made: the RSPB's decision to begin draining the marsh ahead of cutting down the reed bed. Increasingly low water levels, combined with another summer drought, made life very tough for a number of water birds.

Lockdown -- ironically -- also triggered an obvious increase in human disturbance. Wildlife had to cope with more noise, more uncontrolled dogs, more illegal cyclists and more litter than ever. It also affected the birding...for some there was more coverage(no foreign trips!) but for others fewer visits(travel restrictions). All in all -- despite some wonderful highlights -- not a vintage year.

## BREEDING BIRDS

Probably as many losers as winners. The big success story was the Common terns, who fledged a minimum of 90 chicks, closely followed by Black headed gulls, who brought off 60 young. And there was still room on the islands for a pair of Mediterranean gulls to fledge a single chick. Meanwhile, there was strong evidence that Willow warbler nested in Two Mile Coppice. A number of scarce breeding birds did the business again, including Common Firecrest, Goldcrest, Eurasian Jay, Coal tit and Eurasian Treecreeper. And it looked like two erratic nesters -- Eurasian Hobby and Common Grasshopper warblers -- stayed to breed. Alongside the headline species a number of common birds also seemed to enjoy another productive summer.

The most high profile losers were the Western Marsh harriers, who failed to produce young for the first time in a decade. A variety of water birds also struggled. Eurasian Coot breeding numbers were at an all time low and there was no evidence of Common Pochard or Northern Shoveler successfully nesting.

## RARITIES

In a year where we failed to find a single rare wader top billing has to go to the adult **Squacco heron** in late May, swiftly followed by the first **Red footed falcon** for more than 40 years in early June. In the spring an elusive **Purple heron** and a subliminally brief **European Serin** proved the best of the rest. Earlier the dreary winter months were enlivened by two **Eurasian Penduline tits**.

Autumn sea watching turned up a Long tailed skua in the bay. Vis migging produced an **Ortolan** and two **Lapland buntings**. They were followed by two different **Glossy ibis**. But arguably the most unexpected records of late autumn were provided by the first **Rose necked parakeet** for 16 years and the first **Little owl** for about 30 years.

## WINTER

No hard weather movements this year, so a relatively uneventful start and finish to 2020. Early on the over wintering Garganey and Avocet provided novelty value. Later in the year an obvious influx of Great northern divers, the long staying **Iceland gull**, 4 short staying **Long tailed ducks**, all in the bay, and an unexpected Goosander on the reserve brightened some of the shortest days. Otherwise it was a matter of counting some impressive flocks of Eurasian Teal and Common Snipe at both ends of the year. In contrast 2020 was probably the worst year on record for alcids in the bay. Guillemot is in danger of becoming a rarity.

## PASSAGE: SPRING/SUMMER

One of the better springs for wader passage...and the best for Dunlin for many years. April also produced Lodmoor's earliest ever Wood sandpiper and one of the better passage years for both Whimbrel and Bar tailed godwit. In the bay a settled flock of **Common Eider** was followed by a May **Pomarine skua**. But arguably the most spectacular sight of the spring was provided by more than 30 Red kites moving through in a single day in May. Passerines fared less well. It was another truly dire spring for hirundines. There was a decent enough passage/arrivals of Reed warblers, Common Whitethroats, Lesser whitethroats, Eurasian Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs. But Sedge warbler numbers remained low.

## PASSAGE: AUTUMN

Most people could be forgiven for thinking this was a fairly routine autumn. But when you sit down and catalogue everything we didn't actually do too badly. True, there were no stand out rarities. But scarce species included the first Little stints for three years, another [Eurasian Wryneck](#), 2/3 [Yellow browed warblers](#), [Dartford warbler](#), only the second and third records ever of Red necked grebes on the reserve itself and the second [Pomarine skua](#) of the year.

The second half of the year also featured record numbers of Yellow legged gulls, another Great egret influx, record counts of Western Cattle egret and an exceptional flock of Northern Pintail. Arguably the most dramatic -- and saddest -- spectacle of the year was an epic fall of Common House martins in early Oct. Passerine passage was pretty average and while it was a good autumn for Western Yellow wagtails it was another poor year for Northern Wheatears.

I guess one of the joys of wiggling is that no two years are ever the same. Overhead migration helped compensate for a relatively underwhelming autumn for many grounded passerines and waders. Many of the usual suspects only appeared in relatively modest numbers. But 2020 will go down as a record breaking year for both Red Crossbill and Lesser redpoll -- two normally scarce birds over Lodmoor-- as well as being one of the best years for Eurasian Siskins.

## OBSERVERS

Richard Morris, Geoff and Sheila Barlow, Jon White, Dave Chown, Paul Harris, Nevil Fowler, Brett Spencer, Paul Harris and me(+ several uncredited observers).

Daragh Croxson 02/02/2021

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

+ all records Weymouth Bay unless stated

\* all records given

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 Apr 1st, 12th(4), Jun 17th(2), singles Spt 3rd, Oct 12th, 13th and 10 16th.

The double figure count is exceptional for Lodmoor and may reflect the increase in the West Knighton population.

Canada goose *Branta canadensis*

Breeding: the poorest summer for some time. Just 2 broods(from Apr 29th) involving 11 goslings. Like a number of species they may have fallen prey to Foxes.

The usual autumn influx peaked at a new -- and unwanted count -- of 1150 by Oct. The majority of these birds appear to commute to and from the West Knighton area. Every cloud has a silver lining, however, and the flooding in Dec meant that it was occasionally possible to walk round Lodmoor and not have to look at a single Canada!

Dark bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*

A game of two halves. From Jan 3rd - May 10th just 10 records, mainly singles. A poor start to the year. But the autumn was a different story. A total of more than 130 were logged(largely in the bay) on many dates Spt 30th - Dec 27th. Mainly single fig. but counts but incl. 22w Oct 4th and 14 Dec 5th.

\*Pale bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla hrota*

5 records of passage birds all in bay:

3 Bowleaze Mch 15th.

14w Mch 17th.

32w Apr 12th.

7 Apr 16th,.

1, with dark bellied flock, Oct 4th.

2 Nov 16th.

A return to normal numbers after a lean 2019.

Barnacle goose *Branta leucopsis*

No repeat of last year's influx of genuinely wild birds. Instead the usual collection of feral jobs, mainly in association with Canada flocks.

3 were around late Mch. Then a series of records of a single late Aug to late Oct probably related to the same bird.

Mute swan *Cygnus olor*

Breeding: another largely disappointing year. Three pairs nested but the decision to drain much of the reed bed in spring put paid to at least one of them. The sole successful pair raised a single cygnet which stayed with its parents until the end of the year.

Winter: the usual mid winter break in records ended with 3 back on Jan 10th. A dead bird was recorded Feb 18th. Later in the year there were the usual occasional visits by wandering birds to the reserve and bay. These incl. 2 rather incongruously parading along the promenade in Dec and a single bird that hung around the sluice.

\*Egyptian goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*

5 records:

2e Apr 2nd.

8 past Jun 3rd.

1 in off Jun 10th..

2w Nov 20th.

3w Dec 1st.

The point of origin seems more likely to be West Knighton than the Nile Valley.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*

Breeding: at least 2 pair bred. A single chick appeared May 28th, followed by 5 newly hatched birds Jun 1st - 10th. They weren't seen again and may have been predated. However, Shelduck regularly ferry their broods across the bay so its possible they were just moved. A well grown juv was noted on Jly 10th which could have been the May bird.

Movements: 12 went nw Jun 12th. But the record of the year was an extraordinary movement of more than 60w across the bay Jly 20th. It may have been more but there was a danger of double counting the same flock reappearing. In addition 25 were swimming in the bay Jly 27th. In both cases unusually high counts.

Otherwise more predictable numbers incl. a gradual build up from Jan to 22 from Mch to early May. Subsequently a flock of 25, mainly juvs, appeared briefly on the reserve Aug 1st. Birds returning from moult from Oct onwards increased to 15 by early Dec but fell away again to just 2 during the flooding at the end of the year.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Breeding: at least 2 pairs bred again. 5 well grown chicks Jly 2nd were a surprise given the impact the drainage had on the other dabbling ducks. A second brood of 4 were on the undrained rugby club pool later in Jly.

Counts: really low by Lodmoor standards. A max. of 75 early Jun had shrunk to 12 by early Aug. Later an influx in early Oct more than doubled numbers to 50 but this has shrunk to a gathering of 38 by Nov/Dec.

Occasional WB.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Once again the overwhelming majority of records were autumn migrants.

Early on: very erratic. 13 turned up on Jan 1, with 12 WB Apr 2nd but in between just 2 bay Feb 2nd.

Autumn: first returning birds arrived Aug 9th. By mid Spt lingering flocks were present daily, peaking at 90, with smaller numbers through Oct and early Nov, dwindling to a group of up to 2-3 that wintered to the year's end.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Breeding: first ducklings appeared Mch 24th. Subsequently 4 broods by late Apr. Nesting numbers, however, were reduced by the draining of the reed bed. But, as in previous years, a number of late(second?) broods appeared in the early autumn. And none later than a duck with 8 chicks on Charlbury Basin Oct 31st.

No big counts this year.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Breeding: no ducklings seen and even adults were hard to come by in mid summer. Reduced to single figure counts Jun-Aug. Dabbling ducks generally didn't much like a drained reed bed in a drought. A wintering flock of 46 had settled by the viewing shelter during the Dec. floods. Also recorded nearby at Jurassic Ponds Jan.

\*Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

A good run of records in Oct for what is often a scarce bird on Lodmoor.

Early on: 1 - 2 Jan 1st - 6th, 28th.

Autumn/winter: 3 in off Spt 18th, 1 19th, 26 Oct 2nd, 8 4th, 15 6th, 2 14th, singles Nov 2nd, 4th, Dec 1st and a drake 23rd.

The Oct flock was exceptional by Lodmoor standards.

\*Garganey *Anas querquedula*

2 records:

The wintering female from 2019 stayed until Feb 3rd.

Pair Aug 19th.

This must be a first....more over wintering records than spring ones!

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Early on: once again no shortage of wintering birds to scan through in the hope of finding one with a lateral flank stripe! Early on 250+ were around in Jan, dwindling to 100+ by mid Feb. 37 were still present late Apr, with pair still May 20th. Birds were often seen displaying in early spring but there was no suggestion of breeding.

Summer/autumn: the first returning/non breeding birds were back Jun 14th. Even low double figures aren't usually reached until Aug, so 25 on the rugby club pool Jly 31st was a surprise. Numbers gradually rose to 100+ by mid Spt.

Late on: healthy numbers again. 270+ had arrived by early mid Oct. There was an influx of several species of duck in the first week of Oct. Most, if not all, stayed on. In Dec at least 250 were feeding on the southern end of the reserve and Overcombe, with at least 200 of them to the year's end.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Breeding: the first blank year for a while. One of number of casualties of the decision to start draining the reed bed in the spring. A handful hung on through May but had all deserted by late June. And there were no records at all until Aug 21st.

Winter/non breeding: no prospect of besting 2019's record breaking count. At the start of the year 200 had gathered in a bachelor flock on the post box pool. But that was as good as it got. Numbers gradually dwindled until they had all gone by late Mch. Up to 20 turned up in Apr but most didn't linger.

In the autumn a modest sized flock climbed slowly to 35 by late Spt and finally swelled to 107 by late Oct. Numbers then fluctuated between 95 and 45 to the end of the year as birds commuted between Lodmoor and Abbotsbury.

Tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*

Breeding: fared better than Pochard or Shoveler. Three broods -- of 7, 5 and 2 -- appeared late Jly early Aug.

Winter: some quite good counts for this species incl. 80 Jan 6th and up to 62 in Dec.

\*Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

A return to form after two relatively lean winters:

At least 3, from 2019, until Feb 18th, with at least 2 to 26th.

1 Oct 12th, with 2 19th - 23rd. All fem/imms.

2 imm drakes Nov 24th, with up to 4 -- 2 drakes and 2 imm drakes Nov 30th - Dec 27th.

The Oct record was Lodmoor's earliest returning date. There were a minimum of 7 different birds Oct/Dec, occasionally moving between Lodmoor and Abbotsbury.

+\*Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*

A flock of 9 off Overcombe, incl. 3 drakes, Apr 15th.

Spring passage birds are almost regular in the bay. Recorded in WB in every one of the last 6 years.

+Common scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Early on: a fairly good series of records in the bay. Up to 13 lingered on a number of dates Jan 1st - 16th. Then what may well have been the start of spring passage in Feb incl. 5 15th, 7 20th, 5 29th. Another 29 went through the bay Mch 4th - Apr 6th.

Autumn: 6 turned up Jun 16th, followed by 6e Jly 3rd, 6w Aug 2nd, and 1 27th. Amazingly there wasn't a single Spt record. And the whole of Oct mustered just 12 birds on 6 dates.

Late on: an obvious arrival/movement in Nov with a total of 34 on many dates. But in Dec confined to just 2 5th, and 3 18th.

+\*Long tailed duck *Clangula hyemalis*

1 record:

4 in bay, incl. 2 male types, Dec 25th.

A bit of a turn up. This appears to be a record count for the Lodmoor area. They may have been the birds wintering on the Fleet, which had gone temporarily AWOL.

\*Goosander(Common merganser) *Mergus merganser*

1 record:

red head, with Mallards, Dec 25th, 27th.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Breeding: pair bred Overcombe end of reserve again. Probably bred on the western side of the reserve and/or Horselynch area again.

A particularly dopey male hung around the southern end of the reserve Nov/Dec.

+\*Red throated diver *Gavia stellata*

The series of sightings in the bay late in the year suggests there may have been a genuine, if small, influx:

1 Jan 22nd, 23rd.

singles Feb 12th, 24th.

1 Oct 10th.

1 Nov 14th and 1 - 2 21st - 26th. Then single(s) on 7 dates Dec 4th - 29th.

Great northern diver *Gavia immer*

Numbers in recent winters have remained stubbornly low compared to the first decade of the century. So, an obvious influx in the second half of the year was a welcome change.

Early on: 1-3 present in Jan and, less regularly, Feb. Records all but petered out in Mch and Apr(what's happened to spring migration?).

Summer: another June record...a summer plumage bird from 4th - 6th.

Autumn: an early record Spt 9th presaged a flurry of Oct records featuring a minimum of 3 different birds on many dates. Great northern often don't show in the bay until well into Nov so the Oct records were a pleasant surprise. In Nov numbers increased to at least 7 towards the end of the month and early Dec, before falling back to 1-3, until 6 Dec 30th. Clearly some were commuting between bay and Portland Harbour but nevertheless one of the best autumns for a long time.

+Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

Gales early in the year helped produce 9 records of singles Jan 16th - Mch 15th.

There were 8 more singles in spring from Apr 20th - Jun 11th.

In the autumn 4 went w Jly 27th, 6 Aug 25th and finally 1 Spt 25th.

Nearly all in the bay but occasionally in spring over the reserve.

\*+Manx shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

1 record:

3w across the bay Jly 27th.

Little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Breeding: at least 4, and possibly more, pairs bred. Birds by the pb pool, the pools east of Beachdown, the rugby club pool and the pools by 2MC all bred. The Beachdown pair managed 3 chicks, the others at least 1 each. At least one more pair may have nested up the northern end.

Winter: numbers seemed quite low this year. Max. counts early in the year failed to get past 5, with 6 in Dec.

\*Red necked grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Basically 2 record of 2 - 3 birds:

1 by tern islands Nov 13th - 17th, when it was joined by a second bird. The original bird then moved on (possibly to Portland Harbour). The second bird stayed until Nov 29th.

1 bay Dec 26th....may have been same as Portland Harbour

We've got used to long staying Red necked grebes in the bay and we've occasionally enjoyed Slavs and Black necked grebes on the reserve itself. But a long staying Rn grebe ON Lodmoor is a first. The only previous record of Red necked grebe on the reserve was a one dayer in the freeze of Jan 1982. So the arrival of not one but two -- that both hung around -- is remarkable.

Great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Breeding: 1 pair raised 2 chicks on the pools east of Beachdown. Both survived to fledging. A second pair on the pb pool gave up.

Winter: another winter of very low numbers in the bay...now becoming a familiar theme. Early on a count of 11 in Jan was as good as it got. In the second half of the year an early bird was back from Spt 30th. Subsequently numbers remained stubbornly low, with a max of just 8 and on some days none at all.

\*+Slavonian (Horned) grebe *Podiceps auritus*

1 record:

2 bay Jan 20th.

A distant grebe in the bay in Nov was probably Slav. But couldn't be definitively identified.

\*+Black necked grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

1 record:

1 bay Dec 8th.

We'll never know but there's always the suspicion that these occasional mid winter records are wanderers from Portland Harbour.

\*White stork *Ciconia ciconia*

1 record:

fly over Oct 11th.

One of the birds from the Sussex reintroduction programme that began wandering around the south west in autumn. It was seen later the same day over The Fleet

\*Glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

2 records:

1 Oct 20th.

1 Nov 9th.

The Oct bird was part of a Dorset wide influx that day. Lodmoor's 7th and 8th records.

\*Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

The flurry of early spring records was typical:

2 Feb 5th - 8th.

1 Feb 11th...different from above.

2 Feb 22nd - 24th.

1 Mch 3rd - 5th.

2 May 26th.

1 Aug 18th.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

Another series year of spring boomers doesn't disguise the fact that this was another poor year for wintering birds.

1 was booming regularly Feb 27th - Mch 10th. One the birding rituals of spring has been the dusk watch for departing birds. And vocal individuals were watched leaving on Mch 16th and 17th.

In the autumn at least 1 was back from Spt 26th. There was then a flurry of sightings, possibly involving 2 birds, Oct 10th - Nov 24th. However records then unexpectedly petered out suggesting perhaps that the Oct/Nov birds may have been migrants and that Lodmoor is as much a stopping off point as a wintering area.

\*Squacco heron *Ardeola ralloides*

1 record:

summ plum adult May 21st - 23rd.

Only the 2nd Lodmoor record...and the first to be enjoyed by more than a couple of observers. This record also won the finder the gold medal for upstairs landing spot of the year...a small heron picked out hundreds of yards away creeping about the edge of the reeds at the crack of dawn.

\*Western Cattle egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Becoming ever more frequent. A series of records featuring two record counts for Lodmoor:

3 Feb 5th.

2 Mch 4th, 2 23rd, 24th, 3 26th.

1 summer plumage Overcombe Apr 18th.

1 May 10th, 11th, 17th.

1 summer plumage Jly 16th.

at least 14 in a flock of 19 egrets over w Jly 17th.

1 Aug 31st - Spt 2nd, 4th, and 7th, with 3 11th, 2 12th, and 1 17th.

6 roosting on tern islands Oct 19th.

17 roosting on ws Oct 25th, 1 26th, 7 27th, 2 28th.

1w Dec 30th.

The Jly flock may have been entirely made up of Cattle egrets but couldn't all be sussed before they disappeared west. So the 17 in Oct is -- for now at least -- a new record count. In a number of cases different records obviously related to the same birds. Nevertheless a another dramatic increase.

Grey heron *Ardea cinerea*

Not quite ever present this year! Birds were pretty scarce during the floods in Jan.

Otherwise a typical year with birds subsequently visiting in varying numbers daily from Nottingham. Peak numbers in mid summer: 17 Jun 27th and 15 Jly 22nd, 23rd.

As usual Eels often formed a high proportion of their diet.

\*Purple heron *Ardea purpurea*

1 record:

adult Apr 9th and leaving east at dusk 11th.

The 15th Lodmoor record but the first for 6 years and only the 3rd in the last 12 years.

\*Great egret *Ardea alba*

Wow!

Once a genuine rarity and now -- in the autumn at least -- quite literally an everyday bird.

1 May 22nd - 26th may have been responsible for a series of sightings from early Jun. 1 - 2 later in the month, up to 3 Jly, and up to 4 Aug. In Spt 2 - 4 regularly and a max of 7 17th. Oct hosted up to 3 birds.

Subsequently much more erratic with a smattering of single sightings to Nov 27th.

A clear pattern has now become established. What looks very much like post breeding/non breeding dispersal from Somerset involves a number of long staying birds. Slightly odd then that, so far, records peter out later in the year and none have yet overwintered on Lodmoor.

Little egret *Egretta garzetta*

An influx of 16 Mch 21st could have incl. genuine immigrants.

Otherwise up to 8 locals -- Nottingham birds as well as from further afield -- regularly frequented the reserve. That increased to 10 by Jly and Aug.

Records were patchier during flooding at the beginning and end of the year. This species definitely doesn't like high water levels.

Through the year birds could often be seen flying in from and out to the east so there is probably a fair bit of movement among the Dorset population.

+Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*

A vivid demonstration of how the seasonal status of this species has changed in the bay was provided by the dates of the highest counts of the year: 90+ when a feeding flock arrived Dec 25th, 26th.

Only ten years ago the total for the whole of Dec was a grand total of 4.

If not quite an every day bird Gannet is now a frequent and regular visitor to the bay in every month of the year.

Up to 35/day were around in Jan, with 25 daily in Feb. Birds were present in smaller numbers through the spring and early summer, rising to 30 a day by late Jly. A dead bird was on the beach Spt 1st.

Numbers dropped to generally single figures again Oct - mid Dec before the Christmas influx.

+European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

A pretty typical year.

The bay doesn't seem to attract some of the big numbers that can occur in Portland Harbour. The highest count all year was 8 Dec 17th. Having said that the bay is a big place and distant *Phalacrocorax* can easily be overlooked. Certainly regular in small numbers in the winter months.

No records at all from Mch 19th - Jly 27th, and then only the occasional singles before more regular by late Spt.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

The saddest sight of the year was a sick bird that was eventually finished off by an out of control dog by the new bridge.

The ones that didn't run foul of the ever expanding packs of dogs incl. 10 *sinensis* type birds on the reserve in Feb and a single flock of 26 n over Lodmoor Jan 21st, and counts of up to 45 birds in and out of Portland Harbour at dawn. Gatherings of between 10 and 20 on the reserve have become increasingly regular.

\*Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Basically 5 records. The Spt sightings almost certainly related to the same bird:

1 Lorton Meadows Mch 30th.

1 May 6th.

1 nw Jun 17th.

1 Aug 15th and 16th.

1 fishing Spt 21st, 22nd, 26th, 27th.

The Aug/Spt records may relate to just one bird that hung around the Weymouth/Fleet area off passage.

Red kite *Milvus milvus*

A record year....reflecting their expansion into Dorset.

Spring: a series of records of mainly singles on 12 dates Mch 22nd - May 9th, were followed by the extraordinary spectacle of 34w May 10th. The actual total was probably far higher. A report from Preston village claimed 50 going over. Finally 2 more went through May 20th.

Autumn: singles Spt 20th, Oct 16th and Nov 19th.

It doesn't matter how much commoner they become Red kites must rate as one of the best avian spectacles available in the UK.

Western Marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Breeding: sadly after 10 successful years the harriers finally failed in 2020. The decision to drain the reed bed put paid to the pb pair, who abandoned two prospective nests. But the northern end wasn't affected and the pair there also failed, despite much activity. Prey was watched being dropped into the reed bed as late as Aug. But if there were young they either perished or were predated.

Birds, however, were present year round and there was plenty of pair bonding and displaying in the final months to encourage us to believe they'll be trying again next spring. Up to 5 could be seen together on occasions as birds commuted between Lodmoor and Radipole. Over the course of the year a minimum of 9 identifiably different birds were seen...incl. occasional visits from the really smart Radipole male.

In the 10 summers they did nest successfully a total of 32 young were fledged and added to the British population.

Prey items this year incl. a male plucking a Black headed gull.

The Lodmoor birds often wandered quite widely...and could occasionally be seen as far as Redcliff and the Ridgeway.

Longer distance migrants may have incl. 3 over Lorton Valley May 10th...the same day as the Red kite influx...and 1 juv. type bird in off and over Aug 4th.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Breeding: the resident population seems stable. At least 3 pairs appear to have territories. The one in Horselynch fledged a minimum of 3 naïve youngsters who could be regularly seen getting aggravation from the local corvids whenever they took wing.

Prey items incl. House martin.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Breeding: probably bred in the 2MC area again.

Passage: 4 in off Mch 14th and 2e 23rd had the potential to be immigrants. But as ever the picture is confused by resident birds wandering around from nearby territories at Redcliff and Coombe Valley. Definitely not as regular as once was in winter. It is possible that competition from the harriers may have had an impact.

#### Water rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Breeding: a minimum of 4 calling birds in Jun/Jly strongly suggests that they successfully nested again but working out how many pairs there are or how many chicks make it to fledging is impossible to say. A juv. up the northern end Aug 7th may well been locally bred.

Winter: a healthy population continue to make their presence known. At least 8 could be heard/seen Jan, Feb. and again Nov/Dec. In both cases these figures are probably a gross underestimate of actual numbers.

#### Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Breeding: possibly the poorest year on record. Normally at least 12 pairs nest in the wider area. This year just 4 broods -- of 2, 2, 1 and 1 were noted.

#### Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Breeding: like Moorhen this species was an obvious victim of the reed bed drainage -- combined with a mid summer drought. No more than 7 broods were noted all spring and summer...a terrible total for a normally abundant breeding bird.

Not surprisingly no big flocks were recorded either this year.

#### Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*

Breeding: more breeding birds than ever competed for space on the southern end of the reserve. A total of 4 pairs were in territory in the spring. But with this species there doesn't seem to be much correlation between the number of pairs and the number of fledged young. And for only the third time in 18 summers not one pair managed to bring off a single chick.

The pair on the tern islands hatched 1 chick but it perished after just 3 days. Elsewhere the Hump pair deserted twice -- the second time after the eggs were trampled on by cattle prematurely released onto the marsh by the RSPB (when will they learn). A 3rd pair on the west scrape abandoned and a 4th pair never really got as far as a scrape to abandon!

Growing competition for space may help explain sightings of feeding birds on Weymouth College sports field and Weymouth rugby club.

Winter/passage: 1 back by Jan 4th and birds present until Aug 31st. Subsequently 3 Bowleaze Nov 25th, 1 WB Dec 1st, and what looked like a returning bird getting ahead of itself on a number of dates Dec 10th - 20th.

#### \*Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

5 records involving about 7 birds:

1 Jan 1st - 31st, then many dates Feb 6th - 24th. Almost certainly the wintering bird from Dec 2019.

1 Mch 16th - 18th, 2 19th - 23rd.

2 Apr 10th.

2 May 5th.

2 Aug 30th.

1 Spt 3rd.

Hard to say exactly how many birds were involved here. The Mch sighting may have been the Feb individual returning, but if it was it was joined by another.

#### Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

Early on: some really good counts in Jan for the third winter in a row. Numbers peaked at around 950 13th before slowly falling away to 480 by early Feb. As usual the vast majority had gone north by the end of Feb with just 1 -3 to Mch 10th.

Spring: singles Apr 2nd, May 20th - 26th.

Autumn: first returning bird Jun 7th. Single figures through Jly, finally rising to 20 by early Spt and 55 by mid Oct.

Late on: 365 had gathered by Nov 10th . 650 had arrived by late Nov, increasing to 730 by Dec, although numbers dropped back to around 450 during the flooding and freeze over Christmas.

#### European Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

Despite the presence of wintering flock just a couple of miles up the road this was arguably the worse year ever on and over Lodmoor itself.

Early on: confined to singles Feb 4th and Apr 1st. A roving flock of up to 200 Coombe Valley Road/Came Down could occasionally be seen from the southern end of the reserve when they distantly took flight inland.

Autumn/winter: singles Spt 6th, Oct 28th and over Redcliff Dec 7th. A really poor return.

*\*Grey plover Pluvialis squatarola*

The second really good year in a row for what can be a scarce bird on Lodmoor.

In spring 5 singles on Mch 28th - 29th, Apr 12th, 19th, 28th - 29th, May 4th.

In autumn 8w Spt 5th. Then 1 19th with 3 20th - 23rd and 2 to Oct 2nd. Finally 1e Oct 12th.

*Common Ringed plover Charadrius hiaticula*

Spring: 17 through on 7 dates Apr 9th - May 10th. Max. count 10.

Autumn: as usual more numerous and regular in the second half of the year. 1n Aug 1 - 10 birds were moving through daily to 26th. A gap in sightings ended Spt 11th with 1 - 3 juvs near daily to Oct 5th. Finally 1 Nov 10th.

No winter records this year.

*Little ringed plover Charadrius dubius*

More like a typical year after a really poor showing in 2019.

Spring: 1 - 3 on 8 dates Mch 16th - 31st, singles Apr 22nd, 27th, May 3rd.

Autumn: juv Jly 7th, then 6 11th, and up to 5 daily to 18th, 4 juvs 27th, 2 29th, 1 31st, 2 Aug 4th, with 1 to 5th.

As ever some visiting birders in late Aug and Spt insisted on misreporting juv Ringos for LRPs.

*\*Eurasian woodcock Scolopax rusticola*

2 records:

1 flushed from inside Two Mile Coppice Jan 15th.

2 leaving there at dusk Mch 2nd and 3 3rd.

Evidence suggests this species may regularly winter in small numbers in the Lorton Valley and isn't just a hard weather visitor. At the moment largely overlooked locally.

*Jack snipe Lymnocyptes minimus*

No repeat of last year's Octoberfest but nevertheless not a bad showing for a species that is usually tricky to see at Lodmoor.

Early on: Overcombe was again THE place to see them with singles on 6 dates Jan 6th - Mch 20th.

Late on: singles Oct 22nd, Nov 30th, Dec 3rd, 18th.

*Common snipe Gallinago gallinago*

It is impossible to say for sure but recent winters appear to indicate a change in status on Lodmoor.

Numbers have been consistently and often dramatically up on 10 years ago. Endless flushing by the harriers make it easier to notch good counts but there's undoubtedly been a real increase. It'll be interesting to see if the trend continues or whether this is a temporary boom.

Early on: peak counts reached a minimum of 150 from late Jan into early Mch.

Spring: as usual numbers dwindled rapidly to single figures by the end of Apr. What was less usual was a series of very late records on My 23rd, 24th and Jun 3rd and 4th. Maybe one summer they'll actually stay to breed.

Autumn/winter: first returning bird Aug 9th but not daily until Spt. Three figures flocks were reached by mid Oct increasing to a minimum of 250 from late Nov to mid Dec. During this spell you could on occasions count up to 150 birds in the air at once as they were flushed by the harriers. But as the water levels rose and the temperatures dropped numbers plunged. By the end of the year 70 was a good count on the main Moor.

*Black tailed godwit Limosa limosa*

Winter: for a species with long legs and long bills they are not very good at coping with flooding. High water levels in Jan and Feb meant just 1 - 4 were erratically present. It wasn't until early Mch that numbers started to increase.

It was a similar pattern later in the year. Up to 23 were present from Oct into Nov. But as the water went up numbers went down...to just 3 by Dec 15th and then none until an isolated single 26th, and 3 31st.

Passage: the usual flocks of spring migrants had gathered for some fattening with regular counts of 60+ by late Mch and early Apr, peaking at 72 Apr 10th - 12th. Thereafter birds were present daily in dwindling numbers to May 24th.

1 Jun 22nd could have been the last bird of spring or the first bird of autumn. In Jly mainly 1 - 6 were present daily but incl. 13 7th. By late Aug numbers had risen to 28 and remained largely stable into Oct.

\*\*Some visiting birders continue to have trouble with godwits on Lodmoor. The DBC 2019 report incl. a claim of a peak spring count of 63 Bar tailed godwits on Mch 31st. No prizes for guessing which species of godwit they actually were on that date.

#### Bar tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*

Spring: as usual the first migrants didn't appear until mid Apr(see above!). Mainly 1 - 5 went through daily Apr 14th - May 1st and incl. a max. of 31e Apr 22nd. Subsequently 2 off passage birds lingered May 17th - 28th with 1 to Jun 10th.

Autumn: as usual much harder to come by in the second half of the year. 1 Aug 26th, then 1 juv. with Blackwit flock Spt 26th - Oct 10th. Finally 2w Oct 14th.

#### Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Spring: another above average passage. An early bird on Apr 4th. Then at least 180 passed through Apr 16th - May 17th. Biggest flocks incl. 38 Apr 17th and 48 May 2nd. The vast majority had gone through by early May with just a couple if singles later in the month and an isolated record on Jun 13th.

Autumn: singles Jly 17th, w 27th, adult Aug 12th - 29th.

#### Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata*

One of the better springs but, as usual, a fairly scarce migrant in modest numbers.

Spring: a total of 28 on 14 dates Feb 18th - May 13th, incl. 8 through Feb 29th.

Autumn: 1 Jun 13th, 2 nw 17th. Then limited to just 6 singles Jly 11th - 23rd and Nov 8th.

#### \*Spotted redshank *Tringa erythropus*

3 records of singles:

cracking summer plumage job Jun 23rd.

winter plumage Aug 10th.

going ne Spt 11th.

Based on looks the Jun bird was a contender for Lodmoor wader of the year.

#### Common redshank *Tringa totanus*

Spring: steady passage in mainly small numbers Feb 29th - May 2nd. Present near daily from late Mch to late Apr. Mainly 1 - 4 with 6 Mch 19th.

Autumn: as usual more pronounced passage in autumn. Passage extended from Jun 13th - Oct 9th, with most from end Jun to mid Spt. No big flocks this year...max. of just 6, but present near daily Jly and Aug.

#### Common greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Apart from lingering wintering birds in Poole Harbour Greenshank is a distinctly scarce species in Dorset in spring and Lodmoor remains one of the more reliable places to catch up with northbound migrants.

Spring: at least 6. 1 Apr 11th with 2 to 18th. 1 or maybe 2 19th - 28th. Singles May 8th, 13th - 15th, 19th - 25th.

Autumn: lingering individuals Jly 18th - Aug 3rd, Aug 25th - 29th, and Spt 30th - Oct 8th. 1 in off Spt 26th.

\*\*claims of wintering birds in the 2019 DBC report are clearly a mistake. You have to go back to the 1980s for the last wintering records on Lodmoor.

#### Green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Winter: 1 only very occasionally Jan, although recorded just up the road in Jurassic Pools. Later in the year regular Nov - Dec 4th but none subsequently.

Spring: it's impossible to tell if a series of records related to lingering wintering birds from nearby or genuine long distance migrants. But 1 -2 regularly Mch 17th - Apr 26th.

Autumn: first back Jun 16th. Then, by Lodmoor standards, modest numbers near daily to Oct. Max. of just 6. More unusually records persisted through Nov...mainly 1 -2 but also incl. 6 on pb pool 22nd. Last Dec 4th.

#### \*Wood sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

3 records:

Apr 14th.

the Jurassic Pools bird from Jly 23rd visited Lodmoor 27th - 30th. There may have been two birds but was more likely the same bird commuting back and forth.

Aug 12th - 26th.

The Apr record was Lodmoor's earliest ever.

As ever a number of other claims in Aug related to juvenile Redshanks.

Common sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Spring: 1 Apr 3rd is a very early record for Lodmoor. Then another 8 singles Apr 12th - May 14th, but also incl. 4 Bowleaze Apr 21st.

Autumn: return passage began with 5 Jun 27th. As usual birds were then present daily through to the last Oct 5th. Peak movement late Jly with daily max. of 9.

Ruddy turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Early on: wintering flock of up to 14 in Jan and 8 in Feb, mainly on Preston beach.

Spring: 4 summer plumage on reserve May 15th, 2 16th.

Autumn: 1 summer plumage Aug 19th, 3 on groyne 29th, 1 Spt 11th, 3 21st.

Late on: up to 32 gathered on Preston/Greenhill beach in Oct, with to 26 present daily --- despite incessant disturbance from dogs -- to the end of the year.

Turnstones are the most watched and photographed of the area's waders. An endless procession of non birders stopped, stared, puzzled, and took pictures on their mobile phones.

\*Red knot *Calidris canutus*

Spring: singles Apr 2nd, 14th - 18th, with 2 20th, and 1 summ. plum. 28th.

Autumn: 1 Jly 2nd, 4n Aug 20th, 2 25th, 7 over 26th, 2w 27th, then 3 Spt 17th, with 1 to 19th.

The pulse of records in late Aug contributed to an outstanding year by Lodmoor standards.

\*Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Winter: 1 by Hump Feb 26th.

Spring: singles Preston beach Apr 5th, 17th, 18th, 4 26th, 6 May 4th, 3 5th, 2 in off 13th.

Autumn: 3w Jly 19th, 3 in off 22nd, 5 beach 25th, 1 reserve 27th, 1 in off 30th, 4 beach Spt 6th, 3e 19th, 3 in off 27th, and finally 1 beach Oct 24th.

Strangely none at all during the usual peak of late May/early Jun.

\*Little stint *Calidris minuta*

2 records of 3 juvs:

1 Oct 1st - 4th.

2 Oct 12th.

At last. These were the first genuine records on Lodmoor since 2017.

\*Curlew sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

4 records of 6 birds:

1 mainly summ. plum. Aug 2nd.

1 Spt 3rd, 4th.

1 Spt 16th, 2 17th, 3 18th - 21st.

juv Oct 13th - 17th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

After a series of really lean springs the first really good May movement for nearly 10 years.

Winter: 1 - 9 Jan/Feb, with just 1-2 irregularly in Mch. At the other end of the year difficult to disentangle genuine wintering birds from late migrants. There's evidence that some birds linger through Oct and Nov but then move on to winter elsewhere. At any rate a flock of up to 14 were regular in Nov, increasing to 23 by early Dec but then dropping to just 1 -3 birds to Dec 28th.

Spring: a quiet start and finish with just single figures through most of Apr and late May to 29th. But things picked up dramatically in the middle with counts of 68 Apr 28th and 84 May 4th. That compares with a max. count of just 25 in 2019. But to put this in context the highest May count in 2007 was 436! Those were the days.

Autumn: 2 Jly 11th marked the start of return passage, slowly rising to a max. of 35 by 28th. In Aug max. of 60 15th. Counts of 20 - 35 were common into early Spt. Then came the small surge in Oct/Nov.

\*Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

1 record of 2 birds:

juv. from Aug 8th joined by a white headed adult on Aug 31st. Both birds until Spt 23rd and the adult until Oct 6th.

The autumn adult looked a lot like the returning bird from autumn 2019 and winter 2018/2019.

Comparisons of photographs suggest that, if it was, it had gone a little whiter with age.

Black legged kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*

No big movements but a series of records, mainly in the bay.

About 25 on a number of dates, usually in or after gales, Jan and Feb. Incl. 1 over reserve Feb 9th.

In the summer 1 Jun 11th and 5 Aug 25th.

A total of about 25 in storms late Oct/early Nov.

Finally a flurry of Dec records featuring another 25 birds incl. another on the reserve.

Black headed gull *Larus ridibundus*

Breeding: there's no holding back the new colony on the tern islands. A total of about 20 breeding birds produced and fledged a total of at least 60 chicks. The first appeared May 26th. Six years ago just 1 pair raised 3 chicks.

Astonishingly -- given competition on two tiny islands with Common terns, Med gulls and Oystercatchers --- they all found space to thrive. A lesson for Brexit voters.

Winter/passage: no systematic counts made in pre roost or in bay this year. But incl. approx. 1600 in bay roost Dec.

\*Little gull *Larus minutus*

Feast or famine.

22 records last year. Just two (of maybe the same bird) in 2020:

first summer Jun 27th.

first summer, perhaps the same, Jly 7th - 10th .

Mediterranean gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Breeding: Lodmoor's first breeding pair successfully fledged one of their two chicks on the tern islands. It has been coming. Displaying birds have been evident for several springs. This year several pairs courted on the islands but only a single pair of 3rd cy birds actually nested. More to come in 2021 no doubt.

Winter: another year...more record counts. When will reach a peak? These incl. an estimate of 2,000 in the bay roost Feb 8th, 2000/3000 in a sw gale Feb 15th, up to 2,000 Dec 4th and a minimum of 1700 Dec 20th.

There can be no other species whose status has been so dramatically transformed locally. To put this into perspective the DBC report for 2000 provides a WB max. of 10 and individually lists the grand total of 19 birds that were recorded on Lodmoor over the entire year.

Spring: even relatively recently Meds could be pretty scarce in Apr and May. But apart from the breeders small numbers now pass through daily.

Summer/Autumn: Jun used to be another month often Med free. So a count of 136 imms/non breeding birds 9th is seasonally impressive. The first juvs from elsewhere began appearing Jly 5th building to a max. count of 108 Aug 5th. The proportion of juvs starts low but rises by Aug. One observer calculated that by then approx. 20% of birds moving through were juvs.

Flock totals of passage birds on the reserve incl. 750+ Jly 14th - 18th, 640 23rd. Later the pre roost on west scrape incl. 250+ Oct 18th.

Common gull *Larus canus*

Spring: passage seems to start as early as late Jan with up to 70 birds a day moving through Lodmoor on some dates in Feb. A WB roost count of 800 Mch 12th may also have incl. some migrants. The wintering birds depart rapidly in late Mch and thereafter just 1- 2 noted through to May 23rd.

Summer: the usual gap in records was only briefly bridged by singles Jun 4th and Jly 6th. The main return of wintering birds doesn't seem to get going until Oct.

Winter: the problem with counting birds in the WB roost is that they tend to arrive at or after dusk and depart before or at dawn. Unlike many of the local Herring, Med and Bh gulls the overwhelming majority head straight inland and only visit Weymouth when it's dark. But a minimum of 1500 were roosting in the bay in Dec.

Great black back gull *Larus marinus*

Ever present WB and Lodmoor. Like Cormorant a regular consumer or some impressively large Eels.

\*Iceland gull *Larus glaucooides*

1 record:

1st cy Nov 18th - 2021.

Initially picked up miles away in the bay this bird took some pinning down before it could be definitively identified as Iceland. It visited the reserve only very occasionally but was a near daily pursuer of fishing boats in WB.

Herring gull *Larus argentatus*

Breeding: local breeders incl. a pair that raised 2 chicks on a house in Southdown. The good news is that none of the local breeding population gorged themselves on tern chicks this year.

Passage/Winter: without question the most striking record of the year was a remarkable looking leucisitic bird hanging around with the local gulls off Bowleaze Spt 2nd. Max. count of 2,500 WB Nov 26th.

Yellow legged gull *Larus michahellis*

Another *Larus* that increases year on year. This year there were a total of 44 records, mainly 1st and occasionally 2nd cy birds. However, two rather smart adults turned up Apr 2nd. There was also a 3rd cy bird Jly 7th.

Now recorded most months of the year but the peak remains very clearly late Jly - early Spt...accounting for more than half of all the records.

Lesser black backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*

Usual passage of up to 30 daily late Feb- early Apr and again Spt/Nov...incl. smattering of intermedium birds in the autumn.

Nowhere near as numerous in the WB winter roost as the other regular gulls. But 84 were counted Mch 12th.

The most striking individual of the year was an adult with pink dye on its underparts and wings.

Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*

Winter: ad and imm WB and reserve briefly Jan 1st.

Spring: 1 Mch 13th but passage birds not regular until Apr 2nd. Mainly just 1 -2 but recorded virtually daily into early Jun.

Summer/autumn: first returning birds noted late Jun. Family parties of migrants incl. food begging juvs are a feature of a Lodmoor autumn and the first parent-juv parties appeared from Jly 8th. Numbers increased to 12 daily by late Jly/early Aug and incl. 30+ through the bay in gales Aug 25th. 1-8 were regular through Spt, with the last record of the year Oct 8th.

Little tern *Sternula albifrons*

The relatively recent success of the Ferrybridge colony surely accounts for a noticeable increase in records, both by the tern islands and in the bay.

In the spring recorded Apr 23rd - May 12th and incl. counts of 31 Apr 28th and 26 May 11th - 12th.

Subsequently 2 turned up Jun 12th, 17th, 1 Jly 7th and 3 were feeding off the beach Jly 19th and 29th - Aug 1st.

\*Roseate tern *Sterna dougallii*

2 records :

1 tern islands Jun 11th.

1 tern islands and Bowleaze Jly 1st. Possibly more than one involved but probably the same.

Recorded in 15 of the last 17 years.

Common tern *Sterna hirundo*

Breeding: one of the year's good news stories. Protected by netting, poles and upturned plastic bottles about 45 pairs fledged a minimum of 92 chicks....possibly more than that.. A few pairs inevitably failed and a few bred very late after second brooding. But after years of horrific mortality rates fledging success was incredibly high. Apart from anything else there is clearly no shortage of sand eels in Weymouth Bay.

The vast majority of birds nested on the two tiny islands...with a few on the pontoon. The RSPB's efforts to start a new colony on the third(larger) island clearly haven't worked. For whatever reason this island has never attracted nesting birds. The RSPB deserve credit for combating the predatory Herring gulls. But maybe the time has come to think again. Between them BH gulls and Common terns raised a staggering

150+ chicks. Surely there's now a strong case for filling in the space between the two breeding islands to create a single larger breeding area.  
First returning bird: Apr 13th. First chick: Jun 6th. A couple of pairs of very late nesters meant that this year a few juvs were hanging around at a lot longer than usual, with the last to go Spt 3rd.

\*Arctic tern *Sterna paradisaea*

3 records:

1 fishing off Overcombe May 5th.

1 fishing off Overcombe Jun 4th - 6th.

2nd cy around tern islands Jun 11th and then on a number of dates Jly 1st - 10th.

One or two immature/non breeding Common terns turn up around the colony most summers but an immature Arctic was unexpected.

\*+Black tern *Chlidonias niger*

1 record:

juv. w WB Oct 2nd.

+\*Pomarine skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*

2 records:

pale phase e May 5th.

pale phase w Oct 27th.

+\*Arctic skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

1 record:

pale phase chasing wader sp. across bay Oct 31st.

+\*Long tailed skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*

1 record:

juv. w Wey. Bay Aug 25th.

It appeared several days after a flurry of sightings off Chesil. After wafting elegantly across the bay it appeared to enter Portland Harbour. Second record for Lodmoor, following juv Aug 27th 2012.

A three skua species year is excellent for Weymouth Bay. Just a pity the normally more reliable Bonxie didn't turn up to complete the set.

+\*Common guillemot *Uria aalge*

The previous two years have been among the poorest on record for alcids in the bay. 2020 was worse.

A grand total of 4 records all year:

Singles Jan 19th, Dec 2nd, 26th and 2 30th.

+\*Razorbill *Alca torda*

A depressingly similar story to Guillemot.

Early on: confined to two singles on Jan 10th and 9th. Truly dire.

Late on: singles Oct 28th, Nov 16th, 22nd, Dec 2nd, 18th, with 5 26th, 3 31st.

The run of records at the end of the year can't mask a dramatic decline in sightings in the bay.

Whatever the problem is it doesn't appear to be a food shortage. Worryingly it may reflect a collapse in breeding numbers elsewhere.

Stock dove *Columba oenas*

Breeding: 3 pairs -- 2 in Horselych and at least 1 in Two Mile Coppice -- were in territory and presumably bred...a juv was on the reserve late Jun. They were certainly present all year...although often an unobtrusive presence.

Autumn passage: a total of 48 were logged going over --mainly ne -- on 7 dates Oct 15th - Dec 8th. Many were in Woodie flocks but incl. a lone flock of 23 over Nov 4th.

Common wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*

Breeding: ever present. A pair were still feeding fledged juvs in a birder's garden in Oct.

Autumn passage: about 12,000 went over Nov 4th...mainly sw but in many directions. As a result there is always the risk if some double counting with autumn Woodie flocks. Apart from that one day, however, there weren't too many opportunities to count let alone double count! The only other notable movements were 1000+ Nov 12th, 16th.

Arguably the most interesting vis migging of the year were 300+ ne Mch 13th....a rare phenomenon in the spring.

Eurasian collared dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Ever present breeding species and wintering bird, mainly west side/CP/Weymouth Bay Ave. area.

Regular gatherings of 30+ in the car park/CP areas.

\*Common cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Just 2 records:

1 in off May 10th.

ad Jly 8th.

This is getting depressing. It is now seven summers since we had any birds hanging around in spring.

Carry on at this rate they'll be getting as hard to see locally as Turtle dove.

Western barn owl *Tyto alba*

The pair in the Lorton VS nest box fledged 2 young. Sightings over Lodmoor, however, remain a rarity.

Watching birds leaving the nest box it looks very much as if the adults head off towards Upwey and The Ridgeway to hunt.

Tawny owl *Strix aluco*

Calling regularly in the Country Park area. Also heard in ZMC and Horselych in early spring.

\*Little owl *Athene noctua*

1 record:

1 being ferociously mobbed in the hedgerow bordering the reed bed and Horselych Nov 5th.

Strictly this could go down as small owl sp.....the naked eye views of it flushed out of a tree were indeed brief. But if you disregard the remotest of possibilities that a small, round winged, large headed owl with extensive white covert spotting could have been Tengmalm's it seems reasonable to assume this was indeed Little. Frustratingly it was mobbed a second time after the initial flush but just wouldn't show again. In its own way an extraordinary record. Little owls used to breed nearby at Redcliff and Coombe Valley Road but have not been seen there for nearly 10 years. This was the first record for the reserve itself since the 1980s.

\*Short eared owl *Asio flammeus*

2 records of migrants:

1 Mch 30th.

1 Spt 18th and 19th.

The Asio fest of 2018 is already starting to become a distant memory.

Common swift *Apus apus*

Spring: first Apr 22nd. Thereafter only small numbers until 50+ May 5th. But generally poor.

Summer: what may have been a local feeding movement of 300+ Jun 4th, with another 100+ Jly 10th.

Autumn: a feeding flock of 130+ over Southdown Ridge Jly 29th was a good count that late on in the summer. Otherwise a trickle of birds through Aug and into Spt, with the last 4th.

A definite pattern has emerged in recent years. The sudden woosh of arrivals and some spectacular May gatherings have been replaced by a much slower build up and more modest numbers. At the same time there's a tendency for birds to depart a tad later.

Common kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Early on: an over wintering bird remained through Jan but records became much more erratic in Feb to Mch 27th.

Autumn: first post breeding bird Jly 16th . Then the usual run of records with up to 3 near daily from Jly 30th - late Oct. Then 2 to the end of the year. On one occasion the female could be seen catching a species of prawn in the sluice.

\*Eurasian wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

1 record:

1 Bowleaze/Preston Aug 26th.

A Preston birder's find. Recorded in 4 successive autumns.

Great spotted woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Breeding: again nested CP, Horselynch, 2MC, where probably 3 pairs.

European green woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Breeding: 1 pair bred Horselynch again. Also regular CP and the northern end of Lorton Valley. A juvenile visited a birder's garden in late Jun/early Jly.

Common kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Breeding: nested Lorton Valley and Horselynch again. Pair Bowleaze Cove. The LV pair raised at least 2 young.

But often strangely absent from the reserve itself.

**\*Red footed falcon *Falco vespertinus***

**1 record:**

**imm. female Jun 5th.**

**The one that nearly got away. Two observers managed to independently muster brief and inconclusive views between them. Luckily it came back for a second fly past to end the suspense.**

**The 5th Lodmoor record but the first since 1979 and the first for Jun. The others were Apr and May(3). This one turned up the day after a well watched male at Ferrybridge.**

**\*Merlin *Falco columbarius***

**2 records of singles:**

**Spt 18th.**

**Nov 1st.**

**Another "blink and you miss them" year.**

Eurasian hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Spring: about 8 presumed migrants Apr 28th - early May.

Summer/Breeding: a series of sightings from mid/late May to early Jly suggests they may have nested nearby...possibly even in Horselynch. An adult was seen carrying food in that direction mid summer. And an ad and a juv Aug 20th may have been local breeders rather than birds on passage.

Autumn: poor...and none after Spt 12th.

Without doubt the most compelling sighting of the year was an adult in spring talon grappling with a harrier in a failed attempt to steal his prey.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Once again only an erratic and irregular visitor to Lodmoor. A pair still breeds as close as Bincombe so it is odd that they have become so hit and miss on and over the reserve.

**\*Rose ringed parakeet *Psittacula krameri***

**1 record:**

**1 flew n Spt 22nd.**

**The first record of this exotic wanderer since the long staying bird in 2004 and a Lodmoor tick for the finder.**

Eurasian jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Breeding: at least 1 pair successfully bred again in the Lorton Valley. 4 noisy birds were in Two Mile Coppice late summer/autumn.

For the second year running there was an interesting series of records from the bottom of Horselynch and along the border of the reed bed from May through to Jly and again in Spt. No evidence of breeding there so maybe just wanderers from further up Lorton Valley. Also 1 CP Dec 14th.

Eurasian magpie *Pica pica*

Breeding: common and conspicuous. Breeds early. Once again building nests in Feb.

Western jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Breeding: common and conspicuous. Juvs evident from Jun.

Passage/Winter: what looked like small groups of migrants flying high and west on a number of dates in late Oct and early Nov. 700+ in the roost in Lorton Valley Dec.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Breeding: the Preston Road rookery continues to account for many of the sightings over Lodmoor itself.  
Winter: at least 600 joined the corvid roost in Lorton Valley.

Carrion crow *Corvus corone*

Breeding: at least 3 pairs nested once again in the bushes bounding the reserve. The regular Hump pair fledged three young.

Winter: as ever a frequent scavenger on Preston beach where you could divide them into two groups....smart ones and dumb ones. The smart ones collected sea shells and dropped them onto the concrete promenade to check for a meal. The dumb ones copied the smart ones but instead picked up stones and dropped them on the sand.

Passage: as with other corvids there is often the suspicion that as well as the ever present resident population migrants also pass through. One of the most striking records of the year was a count of 27 perched by Beachdown for 15 minutes on Mch 14th which all then departed west as a flock.

A murder of crow lived up to their collective name in Apr when three birds were watched repeatedly attacking a fourth individual until they killed it.

Northern raven *Corvus corax*

Once again a regular winter and post breeding visitor on and over Lodmoor. The recycling centre remains one of their favourite early morning hang outs.

Incl. a family party of 4 late summer and autumn.

Coal tit *Parus ater*

Breeding: 1 pair were again present and in territory in Two Mile Coppice for much of the first half of the year. A second pair bred somewhere round Charlbury Corner....a family party were in trees by the surgery in Aug. Last but not least 1- 2 birds were regular throughout the year in the CP and surrounding area and probably bred in the conifers round the pitchnputt.

Isolated records of a singing bird near the rugby club and another by the old tip probably relate to birds from the CP or 2MC.

Great tit *Parus major*

Breeding: a common and widespread nesting bird. One early fledged juv. May 8th.

\*\*I've ignored a wintering record of Marsh tit reported at Lodmoor in the 2019 DBC report. Without knowing the claimant it is hard to know what to do with it. Way back 1 or 2 pair nested in Two Mile Coppice. But they disappeared as a breeding species as long ago as the 1990s, there haven't been any authentic records since and unlike Nuthatch, Yellowhammer or Little owl there are no nearby breeding sites for birds to wander from.

Eurasian blue tit *Parus caeruleus*

Breeding: another species that continues to thrive on and around Lodmoor.

\*Eurasian penduline tit *Remiz pendulinus*

1 record:

1 - 2 males on a number of dates Jan 28th, Feb 5th - Mch 8th.

These birds moved between Lodmoor and Radipole. None at all on 15 years and then 3 birds in two successive winters.

Bearded reedling *Panurus biamicus*

Breeding: another terrific year. At least 6 pairs successfully bred around the reed bed. And a total of 31 birds, most of them juvs were counted in Jun. They breed early. Food was being taken to a nest Apr 16th and newly fledged young were being fed 22nd.

Winter/passage: present all year, although sometimes hard to come by in mid winter and at the start of the nesting season. There were still at least 17 end of Spt and up to a dozen could be seen getting ready to erupt in Nov. But at least 7 were still around in Dec.

Eurasian skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Breeding: amazingly as many as 3 pairs were in territory in the fields from Redcliff/Bowleaze. Amazing because they seem to have somehow managed to survive ever increasing disturbance from out of control dogs. 1 in the Horselynch fields May 31st may have been a nearby breeder.

Spring: 1 over Apr 10th.

Autumn: not a vintage year for vis migging. About 240 passed over Oct 5th - Nov 13th. Highest day count just 56 on Oct 7th.

Winter: confined to 1 Lorton Valley Feb 25th, and 1 over Dec 31st.

#### Sand martin *Riparia riparia*

Spring: first Mch 14th, with 75 by 19th. There was then a weather related hiatus with none at all in the last week of Mch. Numbers subsequently peaked at 100+ Apr 12th, slowing to a trickle by late Apr/early May.

Autumn: the usual gap in records ended early this year with small numbers regular from Jun 5th. Some of these could have been from Radipole, where they bred. Passage didn't really gain much momentum until late Jly/early Aug. 100+ went through Spt 5th, with the last 30th.

#### Barn swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Breeding: nested in the Greenhill area. But the pair in the block of flats at Overcombe went missing.

Spring: one of the poorest springs ever...even worse than 2019. First Mch 18th, 19th. But then very few until numbers picked up in the second week of Apr. Counts, however, remained depressingly low all spring.

Autumn: only modest numbers in Aug with an obvious increase in Spt. Counts incl. 6,000 10th and up to 5,000 daily 13th - 18th. You could still count 150 as late as Oct 14th .

Miles after all the other had gone a very late bird went east Dec 4th. Not Lodmoor's latest but Dec records are rare indeed.

#### Common house martin *Delichon urbica*

The cast for the most spectacular -- and distressing -- ornithological spectacle of the year. Storms early in the morning Oct 3rd caught out tens of thousands of martins migrating along the Dorset coast. Lodmoor had its share with at least 4,500 that day. They incl. at least 1,000 birds clinging in clumps for warmth to the front of houses all along the sea front the next day. Most had moved on by 6th. Not all made it. One dead bird weighed in at just 6 grams...25% below the usual minimum weight.

Spring: first Apr 12th.. Passage numbers even lower than last year. A spring max. of just 20+, with 40+ hawking around Horselynych in Jun.

Autumn: aside from the epic Oct movement good numbers moved through in Spt, incl 120+ 25th -- autumn passage these days is far more pronounced than the spring. Last Oct 18th.

#### Cetti's warbler *Cettia cetti*

Breeding: How many territorial birds would you say there were? One hard working observer logged 53 singers around Lodmoor, Lorton Valley and CP in May. Allowing for the fact that some males have at least two females on the go this suggests a very healthy population. A minimum of 9 family parties were visible and audible in mid summer....but that's probably just a fraction of the true number. Judging by the number of immature males rehearsing song in the autumn they enjoyed another good year in and around the reserve.

Birds often occur beyond the reed bed and surrounds and were recorded in CP, Charlbury Basin and the northern end of Lorton Valley.

#### Long tailed tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Breeding: another of the common or garden species that seems to be more abundant than ever locally. Family parties and larger foraging flocks were more conspicuous than ever in summer and autumn. Flocks of between 10 and 25 birds were regularly encountered.

#### Willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Breeding: 1 feeding newly fledged young on the edge of Two Mile Coppice Jun 19th appears to be the first confirmed record of breeding locally. This may have been the bird singing there May 10th. In previous summers singers have lingered into late May and Jun nr the rugby club but this is the best evidence yet that the odd pair do nest in the area. A moulting adult on Jly 6th could also have been a local breeder rather than what would have been a very early migrant.

Spring: first Mch 23rd. But in common with many migrants there were very few until the second week in Apr. Passage birds were noted daily in small numbers to Apr 28th, with late singers May 2nd and 24th.

Autumn: first returning birds Jly 16th with 2/3 daily by 23rd, rising to up to 30 a day through to mid Aug. Numbers then gradually tailed off with the last, a juv, Spt 21st.

#### Common chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Spring/breeding: wintering birds as ever clouded the picture but there seemed to be a clear arrival of genuine migrants on Mch 9th, with a fall of 60+ 19th. Subsequently at least 21 birds were in song round reserve, Horselynch, and Lorton Valley in May.

Autumn: good numbers(10 - 20) passed through daily in Spt, with smaller numbers daily through Oct.

Winter: about 6 or so seemed to be wintering around the reserve Jan/Feb, with 1 singing Feb 25th. Later in the year more than 12 lingered through Nov, into Dec. But, as last year, some appeared to have moved on by late Dec(see also Goldcrest), leaving a wintering population of about 6-8.

\*Siberian chiffchaff *Phylloscopus tristis*

1 record:

calling bird by main entrance Dec 17th.

\*Yellow browed warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

3 records:

1 CP Oct 7th.

1 in a birder's front garden Hazeldown Avenue Oct 13th.

1 CP Oct 14th.

It is possible the CP records were one and the same bird but there was a small influx at the time, so it could easily be two different birds.

Sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

The impact of the sharp decline in 2018 is still being felt. Numbers do seem to be recovering but only very slowly.

Spring/breeding: first Apr 8th. But passage really thin. And by the end of May only about 7 territories seem to have been established. The good news is that a minimum of 3 of them were feeding fledged young later in the summer. So, maybe the decline has plateaued and numbers might actually start rising again next year.

Autumn: what looked likely to be migrants appearing from late Jly. But, like last year, only in very small numbers through to Spt 16th. It was easy to walk round Lodmoor in late Aug/early Spt and not see or hear a single Sedge.

Eurasian reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Spring/breeding: the trend for early arrivals continued: first Apr. 3rd. As last year, and in complete contrast to Sedge, good numbers in and singing by mid Apr. One birder's partial census produced 34 territorial males but as he said himself there were certainly more than that. The first fledged birds were appearing by early Jly. Once again an estimate puts the number of breeding pairs at 45/50.

Autumn: many of the juvs around in Aug were probably local. Potential passage birds regular in small numbers in Spt to 22nd.

\*Common grasshopper warbler *Locustella certhiola*

Spring/Breeding: reelers Lodmoor Apr 8th and 11th, Redcliff 10th . One that sang continuously Apr 16th - 28th may have just been trying to attract a mate but may well have stayed to breed. One was still reeling again in the same area Jly 20th.

Autumn: 1 Redcliff Aug 31st.

This species may breed fairly regularly in the wider area, if only in very small numbers.

Eurasian blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Spring/breeding: at least 14 singing males -- mainly in Two Mile Coppice/Horselynch/Lorton Valley through the spring and into summer. Males were singing as early as Mch 9th and in 2MC 17th. But it is hard to say if these were nesting birds or just late wintering males bursting into song...or a mix of both!

A marked spring movement of migrants incl. a fall of 50+ Apr 18th( see Garden warbler). Good numbers continued to move through to late Apr.

Autumn: nothing exceptional...average numbers(daily max. of 20) passed through Spt and Oct.

Winter: about 3 frequented birders' gardens in Jan, late Nov and Dec.

\*Garden warbler *Sylvia borin*

An average autumn and an exceptionally early spring bird.

Spring: 1 Apr 18th...coinciding with a fall of Blackcaps.

Autumn: 2 Jly 29th, then 10 noted Aug -Spt 7th.

Lesser whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

Spring/breeding: now well established as a nesting bird. First Apr 15th. At least 6 territorial birds in by early May with another 2 at Redcliff. Pairs successfully nested along Beachdown, Overcombe, the west bank and Lorton Valley. At the end of Jly four barely fledged and striking juvs were being fed by their parents on Beachdown. This pair probably double brooded.

Autumn: small numbers daily Aug and 1 -2 regularly Spt to 26th. Not one of the better autumns.

Common whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Spring/breeding: 19 singing northern end/Lorton Valley in mid May. Much of their scrubby/bramble bush habitat that was grubbed up has now regrown. The benefits appear obvious. First migrants Apr 12th, followed by a fall of 15+ 18th, with better than average numbers through to the end of Apr. One still singing late Jun was presumably second brooding.

Autumn: mainly 1 -2 daily from late Jly to mid Spt but incl. 8 Aug 31st. Last Spt 25th.

\*Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*

1 record:

1 Redcliff Nov 19th...but no sign subsequently.

A barely annual visitor these days.

Common firecrest *Regulus ignicapilla*

Breeding: what looked very much like last year's resident pair were in Two Mile Coppice area from at least mid Feb, with the male singing from Mch to early May in the same spot as last year's nesting record. No records of fledged young this year but adults were present until at least Jun 29th.

Amazingly the only other record all year was 1 Charlbury Basin Nov 7th. So, no passage or wintering records for Lodmoor itself.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Breeding: at least 3 pairs were in territory again in Two Mile Coppice, with at least 1 more pair in CP. In addition, for the third spring in a row, a bird was singing along Beachdown. It or another was singing at Overcombe in Apr...so they may have bred at the eastern end of the reserve.

Passage/wintering: early on just 3 - 5 Jan/Feb. In the autumn a much stronger passage than last year. Up to 12 a day were around from late Oct to mid Nov. Many moved on but 5-6 were wintering round the reserve in Dec with another 5-6 frequenting Two Mile Coppice.

Eurasian wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Breeding: another good year judging by the number of newly fledged birds around in Jly.

Eurasian nuthatch *Sitta europaea*

A series of records relating two 2 birds Two Mile Coppice Spt 20th - Nov.

Unlike Treecreeper this species is normally only erratically present in 2MC and occasionally Horselynch. But local wanderers don't have to come far and birds have now been around, off and on, for three years. It isn't too far fetched to predict they could become the next new breeding species.

Eurasian treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Breeding: intermittent sightings in both Two Mile Coppice and Country Park through the year strongly suggested a pair bred in each place again.

Common starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Breeding: abundant nester in the wider area. Like last year a very high proportion of juvs in the flocks building up in late summer round the reserve....suggesting this species isn't on any endangered lists. For example a flock of around 100 on the housing estate in Jun incl. 90 juvs.

Passage: quite marked movements this autumn. Incl. 200n Oct 14th and 250nw Nov 10th.

Winter: no big murmurations this year. Max. counts of just 300/400.

Ring ouzel *Turdus torquatus*

3 records:

1 northern end Mch 25th.

1 west side Apr 24th.

1 Spt 21st.

Two in the spring is two more than most springs.

Common blackbird *Turdus merula*

Breeding: Common and widespread.

Autumn/winter: early in the year a strikingly arboreal flock of about 15 birds in the canopy of Two Mile Coppice (see Redwing). Usual flurry of arrivals meant there were at least 50 round the reserve and surrounding area in early Nov. As ever, some had moved on by Dec. But at least 40 frequented the hedgerows up the Lorton Valley to the end of the year.

This species is a lot harder to register on diurnal migration than most of the other thrushes. So 7 heading n early morning Oct 15th is a good daytime count of passage birds.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Really poor year. And, despite the presence of a big flock up the road at Coombe Valley, no winter birds at all.

So, records were confined to autumn vis mugging when just 15 went over on 7 dates Oct 15th - Dec 1st.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Winter: the most obvious flock of the year were a foraging group of up to 50 that mixed with Blackbirds in the upper and mid canopy of Two Mile Coppice Jan -Mch 23rd. Later in the year a flock of about 35 were more typically feeding in the Lorton Valley hedgerows. Otherwise no more than 4/8 in the Country Park at both ends of the year.

Autumn: a very early bird Spt 25th. But one Redwing doesn't make an autumn and subsequent passage was steady if fairly modest compared to some years. Up to 1 - 20 recorded on a number of dates Oct 6h - Nov 9th.

Song thrush *Turdus philomelos*

Breeding: the nesting population appears stable. About 5 males were singing on the western side/CP areas in Apr, with another 4 round the rest of the reserve/Overcombe, 2 Horselynch and 4 more 2MC/Lorton Valley.

Winter/autumn: regular arrival -- albeit in fairly modest numbers -- from mid Oct - Nov 7th, incl. several very greyish looking Continental types.

\*Mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus*

Autumn: 1 n Oct 14th, 2 n and 1 w Nov 5th, 1 n Nov 27th.

Winter: 1 Country Park Dec 8h - 23rd.

\*Spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

Basically 4 records of 8 birds, all in autumn:

1 Lorton Valley Aug 8th.

1 by ambulance station Spt 4th.

1 Spt 8th.

2 Country Park, 3 by old tip Spt 15th.

European robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Breeding: seemed to enjoy an exceptional summer. Many fledged young by Jly. Incl. a pair that nested in an abandoned fridge.

\*Common nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

1 record:

1 in territory again Bowleaze/Preston Apr/May.

There was also a singer just outside the Lodmoor area -- at Jurassic Pools -- May 4th.

\*European pied flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*

2 records of singles, both in CP:

Aug 14th.

Spt 15th.

\*Black redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

3 records of singles:

male on roves Eastdown Ave. Oct 20th.

Imm/fem Bowleaze Nov 19th.

Imm/fem Southdown Ave Dec 1st.

\*Common redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

1 record:

female Apr 6th.

Unbelievably none in the autumn!

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

Spring: 1 n end Apr 22nd.

Autumn: About 7 birds on 6 dates Aug 31st - Spt 17th.

In common with many of the grounded migrant passerines really thin pickings this year.

European stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Breeding: successfully re-established as a breeding bird. A pair successfully nested again in the scrub between the parkride and reed bed. This pair double brooded and may even have brought off a third clutch. More conspicuously a second pair also double brooded in the bushes near the Hump. They brought off a minimum of 2 fledged on each occasion. In addition no fewer than 3 pairs were in territory Bowleaze-Redcliff in Apr.

Winter/Passage: a minimum of 4 birds wintered Jan/Feb. The number of lingering juvs meant it was hard to distinguish migrants from locals in Oct/Nov. But in Dec a total of at least 8 were wintering on Lodmoor and in the surrounding area

Northern wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

A worryingly familiar theme is developing...in the form of fourth disappointing year in a row.

Spring: particularly poor. About 30 Mch 15th - May 12th. More than half of them turned up on just two dates: Apr 19th and 22nd.

Autumn: better than the spring but not by much: about 45 Aug 9th - Oct 9th.

House sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Breeding: time to give a shout for one of Lodmoor's most familiar birds. Combined counts of the Southdown, Overcombe, Bowleaze and CP colonies produced a minimum of 110 birds. And single flocks of 60/70 could occasionally be encountered.

Fascinating to watch the local humans who with one hand go to great expense to chop down the hedges the sparrows use to roost and feed in and with the other hand go to even greater expense to feed sparrows in their gardens!

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*

Remains an abundant resident.

Western yellow wagtail *Motacilla flavissima*

Spring: 8 over Apr 11th - May 16th. That sounds modest but is actually quite good spring passage by Lodmoor standards

Autumn: like last year an early returning record: 2n Jly 18th, followed by a settled juv, 27th and 28th. This presaged one of the better autumn. 1- 4 went through near daily Aug 3rd - Spt 1st, with 9 2nd. Then up to 8 near daily 7th - 27th.

Grey wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Winter: early on less than a handful of isolated sightings Jan/Feb. But in Oct-Dec 1 - 3 regularly.

Autumn: like Yellow wag a strong passage by Lodmoor standards. One very early migrant/local wanderer went over Jly 6th. Then about 50 through on many dates Aug 26th - end Oct, when it became impossible to disentangle migrants from wintering birds.

Pied wagtail *Motacilla yarrellii*

Locally bred juvs started appearing Jun.

Regular passage in mainly small numbers from Spt. The biggest roost count of the year featured 250+ descending into the reed bed Oct 23rd.

Alba(White) wagtail: 1 Apr 14th, 2 17th.

Meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*

Breeding: against all the odds in an increasingly disturbed area 2 pairs were displaying in the fields by Redcliff in the spring.

Winter: relatively few early on...about 20 Horselynych/parknride areas. Later in the year several small flocks amounting to about 30 birds had settled in the Horselynych/Lorton Valley and at Overcombe. About another 30 wintered at Redcliff.

Spring: small visible passage of north bound birds in off mid Mch.

Autumn: not a classic year but significantly better than 2019. Main passage, as ever, from early Spt with a dramatic peak 16th - 18th when 2,000 a day went over. Birds were on the move in much smaller numbers through Oct with a trickle up to mid Nov.

\*Tree pipit *Anthus trivialis*

3 records, all in autumn:

2 Aug 12th, singles 27th, Oct 10th.

Water pipit *Anthus spinoletta*

Early in the year: a bit of a return to form after thin pickings in 2019. 1 - 5 were regularly present Overcombe Jan-Mch and incl. one mobbing a harrier! 1 - 3 lingered into Apr, with the last 4th.

Autumn/winter: very poor. Confined to a few singles Nov 1st - Dec 11th, with 2 on just two occasions.

Overcombe remained the place to see this species. They seem to have largely lost their habit of frequenting the Hump. The vast majority of records now seem to come from Overcombe or from fly overs commuting between there and the middle of the Moor.

Eurasian rock pipit *Anthus petrosus*

The usual smattering of records from Preston beach/Bowleaze Oct-Dec. Almost certainly birds commuting from the Nothe area. They often turn up after storms have washed plenty of jetsom onto the shingle. Singles over Mch 22nd, and on Preston beach Jun 22nd were less expected.

Common chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Breeding: now confined to 1 - 3 pairs CP/Weymouth Bay Ave area, and around 2MC(2 pairs).

Passage/wintering: way down on what they once were, even in CP. Vis migging produced a max. day count of 200+ ne Nov 4th.

\*Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

3 records of calling singles:

ne Nov 4th.

Nov 5th.

n Nov 6th.

The second poor year in a row.

Eurasian bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhoea*

Breeding: at least 2 pairs bred successfully again somewhere on the western side. In addition another 3 pairs bred up the Lorton Valley/2MC, and at least 1 pair Redcliff Point.

European greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

Breeding: the local population seems to have better than in some places. 18 could be counted foraging on the west side in early spring and about 6 pairs appeared to breed in the general area. Sightings of juvs were commonplace in the autumn. In addition a separate colony of perhaps 2 pairs resides in the Lorton Valley.

Common linnet *Carduelis cannabina*

Breeding: at least 7 pairs again nested in the gorse on the west bank, with another 2 on the Horselynych slope. Large numbers of juvs were evident in Jly. A mixed flock of finches in the Horselynych fields incl. at least 100 Linnets.

Winter: as usual only erratically present. 2 went over Jan 5th, 3w 19th. Later on in the year 6 settled birds near Horselynych Nov 23rd may have been off passage migrants.

Spring: 9e Mch 19th, 22 se 25th.

Autumn: quiet. A peak of 60+ daily Oct 14th - 18th and against Nov 2nd. Otherwise more of a trickle than a flood.

Lesser redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*

A record breaking year. This is normally a scarce species for vis mig watchers at Lodmoor...last year for example there were just 2 records.

This year a total of at least 130 went over on more than 20 dates Spt 17th - Nov 19th. There was a clear peak Oct 14th - 19, accounting for about half the entire total. And, like Siskin, flocks sometimes dropped in for a brief rest...providing prolonged views of a species that is normally hard to enjoy at leisure on Lodmoor.

Red crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

Like Lesser redpoll enjoyed its best ever autumn over Lodmoor.

A total of 39 went mainly n or ne on 17 dates Jun 22nd - Nov 2nd. Migrants incl. some really smart red jobs and a single flock of 7. One of the birding highlights of the year for some.

European goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Breeding: for the second summer running a flock over more than 35 juvs suggests this species is thriving locally.

Passage/winter: present year round. In common with a number of finches peak autumn passage around Oct 14th - 18th, when 100+ were going n or e daily. At both ends of the year flocks of 50+ had gathered.

**\*European Serin *Serinus serinus***

**1 record:**

**a singer somewhere in the bushes along Beachdown Apr 4th.**

**One of the most fleeting records of the year. Picked up early morning by its distinctive song by a sharp eared birder it promptly shut up and vanished. Despite its regularity on Portland a genuine Lodmoor rarity.**

Eurasian siskin *Carduelis spinus*

2019 was the worst year for autumn passage for 15 years. 2020 was one of the best years to date...only shaded by record breaking numbers in 2015.

Spring: 2w Mch 11th, 1e 25th, 4e 27th, 4e 30th, 1 31st, 1 n May 20th. An excellent spring by Lodmoor standards.

Autumn: A total of approx. 1,100 went over. 1 Jly 12th, and 2 13th were exceptionally early. The next migrants didn't arrive until the much more typical date of Spt 5. A total of more than 880 went over in Spt incl. single day counts 250+ 7th, and 330+ 18th. In Oct another 100 went over...mainly in the first half of the month. There was still a trickle of birds on odd dates in Nov with the last Dec 1st.

The vast majority go straight over but several birders had the pleasure of viewing perched flocks as they rested up in the tops of trees.

**\*Lapland longspur *Calcarius lapponicus***

**2 records:**

**1 n Spt 18th.**

**1 calling ne over Southdown Nov 6th.**

**Only the 4th and 5th records in the last 10 years.**

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Breeding: a pair bred just east of the Riviera above Bowleaze...part of a westward range expansion from east of Redcliff.

Spring: 1w Lodmoor Apr 27th.

Autumn: Lodmoor: singles ne Oct 16th, n Nov 7th, 23rd.

**\*Ortolan *Emberiza hortulana***

**1 record:**

**imm calling n Spt 5th.**

**None at all for more than 20 years, now 2 in 3 autumn. This one was obligingly vocal and seen well enough to discern streaking on the unders, suggesting an immature.**

Common reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Breeding: at least 6 singers round reed bed and edges in spring. Fledged young were around from late May.

Winter: about 15 birds on Lodmoor and the surrounding area at both ends of the year. More unusually 1 Redcliff Nov, Dec.

**ESCAPES etc**

Black swan *Cygnus atratus*  
Up to 3 Jan/Feb.

Feral pigeon *Columba livia*

The grain fed flock along Southdown Ave continues to prosper....as do the Brown Rats which take part in the free meals.

White cheeked turaco *Tauraco leucotis*

2 different birds...but presumably from the same aviary...flopped about on a number of dates in the summer. Not an obvious candidate for a shortlist of expected exotica. A sort of Lodmoor first!

## MAMMALS

Sika *Cervus nippon*

Max count of 11 this year.

Roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*

Bred again but now less common than Sika!

Grey and Harbour Seal *Halichoerus gypus/Phoca vitulina*

Both species were regular just off and indeed on Preston beach in the second half of the year. Volunteers had to club together to ward off armies of grockles.

Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Badger *Meles meles*

Judging by the amount of grubbed up turf along Southdown the resident population are doing fine.

Grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

An increasing feral resident...particularly in the CP.

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

Appeared to enjoy an excellent year. A combination of the RSPB's drainage scheme and a drought enabled them to reach the parts they couldn't reach before. A nesting harrier may well have been among their prey items.

Weasel *Mustela nivalis*

Recorded fairly regularly.

Common bottle nosed dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

2 Spt 4th.

Mole

Brown rat *Rattus norvegicus*

## BUTTERFLIES

Large skipper *Ochlodes venata* Small skipper *Thymelius sylvestris*

Brimstone *Gonepteryx rhamni*

Large white *Pieris brassicae* Green veined white *Pieris napi*

Small white *Pieris rapae* Orange tip *Anthocaris cardemines*

Brown argus *Aricia agestis* Common blue *Polyommatus icarus*

Holly blue *Celastina argiolus* Small blue *Cupido minimus*

Comma *Polygonia c-album* Painted lady *Cynthia cardui*

Peacock *Inachis io* Red admiral *Venessa atalanta*

Small tortoiseshell *Alais urticae* Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

Marbled white *Melanagia galathea* Meadow brown *Manida jurtina*

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus* Small heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*

Wall brown *Lasiommata megara* Speckled wood *Pararge aegeria*

Small copper *Lycaena phlaeas*

Clouded yellow *Colias croceus*

## ODONATA

Green eye(Norfolk) hawkler *Aeshna isoceles*

The undoubted dragonfly highlight of the year. One perched on the path through reed bed Jun 21st. It turned up at the same time as several at Radipole.

Southern migrant hawkler *Aeshna affinis*

2 records:

1 frequenting a birder's garden pond by the Country Park Aug 8th.

**1 Lorton Valley ponds Aug 9th.**

Southern hawkler *Aeshna cyanea*

Migrant hawkler *Aeshna mixta*

Emperor dragonfly *Anax imperator*

[Golden ringed dragonfly \*Cordulegaster boltonii\*](#)

**1 Jly 31st.**

Hairy dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*

Several late May/Jun in ponds nr Sainsbury's and Lorton Valley.

Azure damselfly

Pair egg laying in a birder's garden pond by CP in Jun.

Large red damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*

Emerald damselfly *Astes sponsa*

Common blue damselfly *Emallagma cyathigerum*

Incl. a teneral in a birder's garden in May.

Blue tailed damselfly *Ischura elegans*

Broad bodied chaser *Libellula depressa*

[Four spotted chaser \*Libellula quadrimaculata\*](#)

**1 May 29th.**

Black tailed skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum*

[Keeled skimmer \*Orthetrum coerulescens\*](#)

[1 garden near CP Aug 8th and 1 Lorton Valley ponds 9th. 2nd and 3rd records.](#)

Ruddy darter *Sympetrum sanguineum*

Common darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

[Banded demoiselle \*Calopteryx splendens\*](#)

**1 Jly 11th.**

**SELECTED RECORDS OF OTHER FLORA AND FAUNA**

Smooth newt

Slow worm

Common frog

Common lizard....1 Jly 31st.

Jersey tiger

Wasp spider

