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Pitsford Water Nature Reserve

Annual Report 2025

Edited by: Mischa Cross, Senior Reserve Officer and
Kev Rowley, Voluntary Projects Officer, The Wildlife Trust BCN

Pitsford Water Nature Reserve 2025



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Cover Photo: *Stomorhina lunata* © Robin Gossage

In memory of David Arden, an avid birder on the reserve and instrumental in working with original warden Cliff Christie to develop the site into the haven for wildlife it has become.



The History of Pitsford Water Nature Reserve

Pitsford Water Nature Reserve forms part of the larger Pitsford Reservoir. This Reservoir was built in the early 1950s by the then Mid-Northants Water Board to supply Northampton with water. The site chosen was a valley formed by three major streams that joined to form a tributary of the Brampton branch of the River Nene. The three streams account for the complex shape of the nature reserve. There are no flooded villages under the reservoir but there are some roads and bridges that emerge in drought years.



The old road that is submerged beneath the reservoir with a bridge over the stream, which appears in severe drought years. © Dave Francis

Prior to the flooding of the valley the land was used for mixed agriculture, typical of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Intensive use of pesticides and artificial fertilisers were mainly things of the future when the site was enclosed for the reservoir. Most of the area that now forms the site is believed to have been in use for mixed agriculture for at least 600 years. The fields then bordering the streams would have been traditional flood meadows.

The whole site is now owned by Anglian Water but the nature reserve, covering all the area north of the causeway was leased to the Wildlife Trust in 1969 and is managed jointly for wildlife by both parties. The Lodge and its car park were subsequently removed from the lease. The nature reserve has a perimeter of approximately 10 km and an area just less than 200 hectares. At high water levels, over half of the reserve is open water.

In the nature reserve there is one area of old woodland known as The Cover. This is predominantly Oak and the trees were 100 to 200 years old when the site was enclosed. A number of old field boundaries can still be seen within the reserve, usually distinguished by their ditch and occasional large hedgerow trees. Ridge and furrow formations can be seen in some areas, particularly in the Scaldwell Bay. These cease at the boundary fence as modern ploughing outside the reserve has destroyed them. Significant areas of the site are mixed scrub, typically Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Crab Apple, and there are several meadows, glades and rides that are managed with a late season hay cut.

During the late 1950s approximately 40 hectares of trees were planted, mainly Conifers and Sycamore, in 33 distinct blocks. The removal of many of these non-native trees forms part of the ongoing management of the site. Where necessary, replanting with native broadleaf trees is carried out; the long-term aim being to produce mixed structure native broadleaf woodland, while still retaining some blocks of conifers. There are extensive areas of scrub and meadow that are actively managed. The

water's edge has areas of willow carr, particularly in the Holcot Bay and off The Point.

In 1970, the whole reservoir was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the strength of the winter wildfowl numbers, particularly Shoveler, and the assemblage of breeding birds. The reservoir was then the largest SSSI in Northamptonshire. From the early 1990s, Anglian Water has funded the employment of permanent nature reserve staff and the management of the site.

The nature reserve has a dedicated team of local specialists who carry out regular survey and monitoring work. Their work covers a huge variety of species including algae, bryophytes, different bird monitoring programmes, moths, diptera and dragonflies. This has built up an extensive dataset, which is important for contributing to national datasets as well as influencing our on-site management activities.



Sunset over Pitsford Water Nature Reserve with Lapwings coming in to roost on the causeway. © Jane Neill.

General Management

Mischa Cross

Structures

The low water levels meant that we could reach some of the hides that are usually over the water and give them a couple of coats of paint and give the underneath a good check over. They all still look to be in good condition.



Above: Walgrave Hide maintenance with the Thursday Practical Team.



Left: The new Bench 16.

Below: Wendy's memorial bench in the Holcot Bay.

at the bottom of the old road to hopefully keep people who wander down the old road and don't use the site respectfully, in this area rather than wandering further into the reserve. So far it appears to be working as shown by the numerous coffee cups and cigarette butts found around the bench. Another bench was installed in Holcot South, with beautiful views over the bay. This was kindly donated and installed by Robin Gossage in memory of his beloved wife, Wendy.



Work has started in preparation for an exciting new project to replace the existing Goosander Hide. The hide will be moved from the original location, leaving the existing hide structure as a feature and roost for wildlife – there have been barn owls roosting in there and it is hoped they may breed. The new hide will be slightly along from the existing hide so some tree work was needed during the winter to be able to prepare the space for the hide. It is hoped the new hide will be fully accessible and be able to accomadate up to ten wheelchairs at a time.



Clearing the area for the new accessible hide.

Interestingly, while working in the area, there was a lot of rubble, metal and man-made debris. After looking at old maps, it was discovered that in that spot there was once a sewage bed!

Paths

The main focus for the next few years is to improve the drainage around the paths and therefore make the site more accessible for vehicles and people in winter without causing excessive damage. With approximately £10K of contractor money removed from the core budget, this work now has to be done in-house. While this is fun and satisfying for staff and volunteers, it does take significantly longer to complete the work.

Approximately 120 tonnes of materials have been bought and distributed around the site to be used as work progresses with the path improvements. Unfortunately, with paths closed as works progress and piles of aggregates dotted around, the reserve does have a slight 'building site' feel in places, but this will be worth it in the long term.

The drainage work has already started since Senior Reserve Officer Mischa Cross gained her excavator licence and all the new drains, so far appear to be working. All except one, which sprang a new leak. The path on the east side of Zig-Zag Meadow was getting wet again. Investigations showed that another old land drain that hadn't been picked up in the original drainage works had now sprung a leak. This was easily remedied by extending the existing ditch to catch the leak. The ditch at the pinch-point between Holcot Square and Triangle Meadows was cleared out but is likely to need improvement at some point.

As part of the path improvements plan and future habitat creation plans for that area, the back path of Block 20 will now become the main access track for vehicles. The front path is essentially underwater during the winter months, therefore hindering access during this time. We are levelling off the ridge and furrow along the back track and therefore will be able to take heavy machinery for much more of the year without causing excessive damage to the paths. It was intended to be completed by the end of summer, but work had to be postponed while we waited for a new tipper trailer that would make



RS Group on a Wild Work Day filling sacks with sand and cement to reinforce the new track.

the job easier, but this was delayed into 2026.



Above: The ditch to the east of Scaldwell stream after deepening. The culvert pipe is relatively small and mostly blocked with silt.

Below Right: 'The Serpentine' on the front path of Block 33.

hopefully in 2026 if conditions allow.

One of the most satisfying drainage installations was on the front path of Block 33. This area has always been wet and year after year, staff and volunteers have filled in the wheel ruts! Hopefully no more! And in the process, a wet flush has been created. This was created in August during the extreme drought

One of the big projects as part of the path improvements is to raise the path, deepen the ditches and replace the culverts to the east and west of Scaldwell Stream. In recent years this whole area becomes flooded for much of the winter, making it hazardous to walk or drive through. Historically, the area has always been wet and occasionally floods, but with more torrential downpours when the reservoir is full, the water can back up significantly – one flood event was up to chest height! The existing infrastructure just cannot cope. The preparation work started this year with completion



and had half filled by October, even with minimal rain. By December it was full and all that water would have been on the path.

Talks and Events

With the drought in full swing and no rain seen for months, on the day of the annual Marvellous Moths and Beautiful Butterflies event, the heavens chose that day to open! It wasn't just a splash, it was torrential, with thunder and lightning. Miraculously, all the attendants turned up and we huddled in the classroom and looked at well behaved moths in pots. Unsurprisingly, we did not venture out to look for butterflies.

Senior Reserve Officer Mischa Cross did her wildlife gardening talk 'Don't Forget Your Flies', to Whilton Gardening Association and Kev Rowley did a Wildlife Trust Training Workshop for water bug identification. Naturetrek also used the site for their guided walks and photography workshops led by Neil McMahon and Dave Jackson.



Habitat Management

Mischa Cross

Woodland

Due to the drought and low water levels, we prioritised our time to working on the margins, therefore work was not carried out in Block 2 or Christies' Copse in winter 25/26, however, a new quadrat was installed in the area of Block 2 that was cleared in winter 24/25.

Three oaks from 'The Cover' that had Acute Oak Decline (AOD) were taken away for research by Forestry Research, to look into the disease. This has opened up a little clearing in that area and as work progresses in Block 2, these oaks will be further thinned out to try and improve the structure and health of the woodland, which will hopefully minimise the effects of AOD.

More pines were thinned out of Block 9 as part of Volunteer Officer chainsaw training courses, producing lots of brash, which was burned in situ. The logs have been left in large piles. A small deer fence was erected in a clearing to see if they have an impact on regeneration where thick grass has already established, unlike the quadrats in Block 2 where the ground was bare when enclosed.

As part of the path improvements in Block 20, some large Sycamore have been felled and trees crown raised. More work is needed next year to open up this track for large machinery.

Grassland

Despite the drought, the grass was initially thick and lush due to the wet winter and spring, but the herbaceous plants were early to flower and quick to go to seed. The haycut was carried out in late august as usual. Powerline Meadow was not cut and raked this year as it is managed as a rank grassland rather than

a flower meadow. It is a nice mix of rank grasses, nettles, docs and some flowering plants but will need a cut and rake in the next year or so.

Wetland

As mentioned, the early part of the felling season for 25/26 focused on the marginal habitats. The Scaldwell Floodplain was completely accessible until November – it hasn't been fully exposed since 2017, so full advantage of this was taken!



The Scaldwell Stream as it reaches the reservoir at the end of the Scaldwell Bay. © Mischa Cross

Most weeks were spent cutting and treating willows from in the *Phragmites* beds and down to the front of the Kingfisher Screen. Some were left as standing deadwood. This work will continue as soon as the next opportunity arises to remove the 'plug' of willows between the floodplain and the main reservoir.



Left: Scaldwell Floodplain

The areas in blue are the existing Phragmites beds. Aerial photos show these have expanded significantly since 2017.

The areas in red are the willows that were cut and treated to prevent regrowth. A couple of trees were treated to create standing deadwood.

The area in yellow were bare mud at the start of the drawdown, likely heavy silt deposits as the river receded back into the banks. This was then colonised by Poplar and Willow seedlings.

South of the work area is the 'plug', which we will aim to remove when conditions next allow.

As the water receded, a large area of silt was deposited, which then was colonised by thousands of Poplar seedlings. This is extremely unusual because we have never known Poplar to self-seed on the reserve. This is why we have a program of planting native Black Poplar to replace the end-of-life existing Poplars. It was unclear exactly which species of Poplar these would have been and regardless of species, they were unfortunately in the wrong place so we had to pull them out by hand.



Kev Rowley with a small fraction of the Poplar seedlings that he helped pull up.

© Mischa Cross



Above: The transplanted Phragmites in the newly exposed bare mud in the Scaldwell Floodplain. © Mischa Cross

Below: The snow covered stumps of Spring Pond Scrub. © Mischa Cross



In amongst them were the usual Willow seedlings so these were also pulled up. The hope is that the *Phragmites* from the two existing beds will spread to join up, forming one large reedbed. To try and help this along, some rhizomes were transplanted in the bare mud between the patches.

Further taking advantage of the low water levels right into December, we managed to get contractors in to start the clearance work in Spring Pond Scrub. Approximately one third of the total area to be cleared has been felled. The budget would not stretch to removal of the stumps so these have been treated and left in situ. When the

reservoir is full, they sit just below the surface and will likely be used for nesting.

As mentioned, to replace the hybrid Poplars that are coming to the end of their safe life, we managed to get seven more native Black Poplars, a mix of male and female. Three of these were planted to the west of Square Pond and four in the margins to the west of Christies' Copse. Of the ones planted in the Walgrave Bay several years ago, at least two have survived.

Recent surveys have shown that the quality of Square Pond has been declining in recent years, this is possibly due to the increase in Willow growth around all but one of the margins. Thanks to the low water levels, these were cut and treated to hopefully keep the pond in its mid-successional state. Two sections on the shallow front edge were also scraped back to bare mud to reduce the bulrush dominance and increase plant and structural diversity.



Walgrave Square Pond after Willow removal and scraping sections of the shallow edge. © Kev Rowley.

Two new design tern rafts were launched, one of which has trial 'goose ramps' fitted, higher sides and no mesh netting. The idea is that if a goose or duck nests on the raft, the chicks will be able to fledge into the water up one of the ramps. Terns do not tend to climb up things to access the water. It will be monitored to see if can help young ducks and geese safely fledge without staff intervention but without causing risk to the Terns and Black-headed Gull chicks.



New design tern raft with trial 'goose ramps'.

Scrub

No significant scrub management was done this year other than incidental work during other jobs because resources were focused on marginal work.



The sparse, open scrub of Christies' Copse. © Mischa Cross

Weather

Kev Rowley

January

January started with significant flooding before cold air spread into the area bringing severe frosts and some snow. This gave way to milder conditions in the middle of the month before it turned unsettled again for the remainder of the month with Storm Eowyn. This brought heavy rain and was the strongest storm for ten years.

February

February began with rain but then had a couple of weeks of settled cold and cloudy conditions with occasional showers. A westerly front brought windy but milder unsettled weather with some very heavy rain. Towards the end of the month the high pressure brought more settled conditions with frosts and fog.

March

This was the tenth warmest March on record. It started with high pressure producing warmer days but with fog and frosts at night. Milder conditions then came in with some showers. The second half of the month was warmer, sunny and more settled.

April

The first two weeks of April saw dry weather with above average temperatures. The second half of the month was more unsettled with rain showers but temperatures were still above average.

May

Overall, May was warm, dry and sunny. It started with warm temperatures before a low pressure brought some heavy showers. The high pressure returned again, with temperatures below average before increasing over the third week. The

month ended with periods of dry weather but with some scattered showers.

June

The month started off cool and unsettled with very heavy rain at times. However, from the second week it started to get warmer with some isolated thunderstorms. By the third week the temperatures had risen into a heatwave and the month ended as England's warmest June on record.

July

July was warmer than average but was unsettled. It started with very high temperatures followed by a week of changeable weather with the 9th to 14th becoming warm again. This was followed by a week of heavy showers and thunderstorms and finished with more average rainfall.

August

August started with average warm weather but then Storm Floris brought heavy rain and strong winds. That was then followed by a week of heatwave conditions. The rest of the month was unsettled but remained mainly dry and warm in the Midlands.

September

This month started with some heavy downpours and remained unsettled with temperatures below average and regular showers.

October

October began warmer than usual but soon rain from the north spread southwards with Storm Amy bringing strong winds and rain. Mid-month was a little more settled for the Midlands, avoiding the brunt of the storms in the North, South and West.

November

The month started warm but was then followed by waves of rain coming across the country, some of which in the middle of the month were very heavy. There were some large temperature swings as mild weather changed into frosty evenings with snow on higher ground.

December

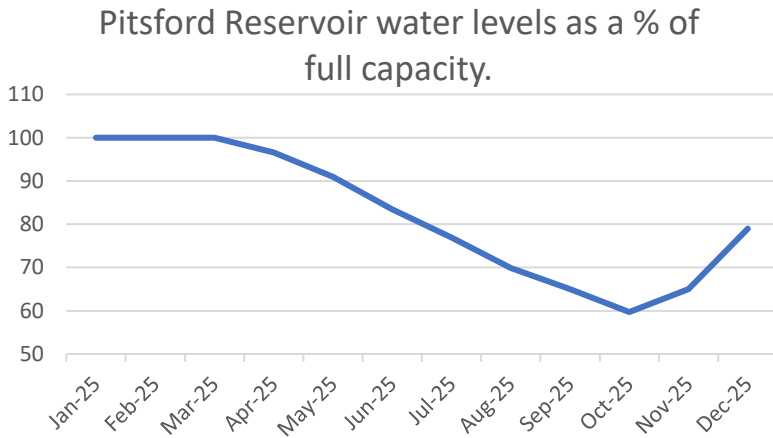
December was wet, warm and unsettled. After the first week Storm Bram arrived with strong winds and heavy rainfall. The weather then continued to be changeable. The final week was sunny and cool.



Scaldwell Bay drawdown. © Kev Rowley

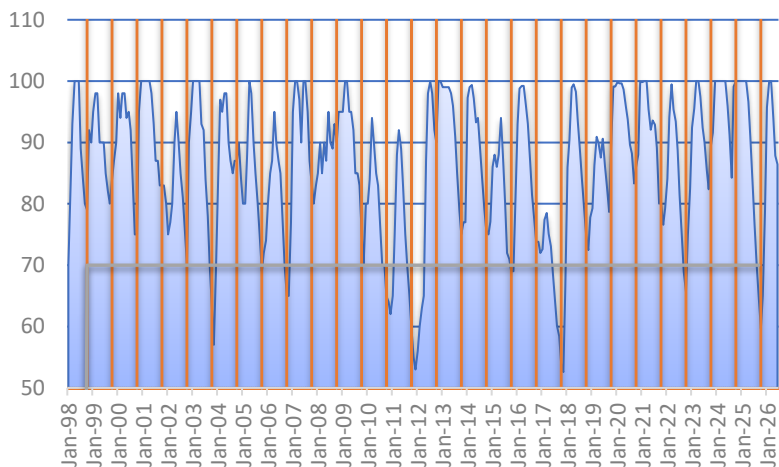
Water Levels

Mischa Cross



2025 saw one of the best drawdowns on the reservoir for many years. The exposed mud attracted numerous passage waders and therefore numerous bird watchers. Due to the drought, some other wetland sites will completely dry out, but thanks to the feeder streams here, the exposed mud is always wet.

The second graph shows the number of 'good' drawdowns in recent years. The red lines are the start of each calendar year and the green line is the 70% capacity mark. This has been highlighted because this is when a decent amount of mud is exposed below the *Glyceria*. Above 70%, there are patches of exposed mud as the water levels drop, but most is covered by a dense vegetation. At approximately 85% the area known as Spring Pond Scrub is completely exposed. This is why this area was chosen to create a large expanse of exposed mud with minimal drop in water levels – see Habitat Management chapter.



Holcot View, September 2025. © Mischa Cross

Species Reports

Kev Rowley

The following chapters are written by members of the Pitsford Water Nature Reserve (PWNR) team, detailing work they carried out in 2025. The full species lists and any survey data are maintained electronically at the Wildlife Trust Pitsford Office at The Fishing Lodge.

The full species list for PWNR, up to the end of 2025 stands at 4237. This is an increase of 85 species from the end of 2024.

The totals take into account any unverified or discounted records that may have been removed from the list and any records missed from previous years that have now been included in this year's report.



Garden Chafer © Robin Gossage

Casual records

Kev Rowley

The majority of records on site come from casual recording as opposed to formal surveys eg. Common Bird Census, WeBS and moth trapping. Some taxa will have their own chapters in the report, but other groups do not warrant a full chapter, and their highlights are covered here.



Trail camera footage of a Polecat in the Holcot Bay.

The trail camera footage continued to record many of our mammals including foxes, badgers, rabbits, rats, mice, deer, otters and even a Polecat this year from the Holcot Bay. The mink traps caught the first Mink at the end of the year that has gone to the Waterlife Recovery Project for analysis and DNA testing.

The Nene Valley Bat Group with Juliette Butler were again busy this year in Block 2 with five guided visits and work on the bat boxes, recording five species of bats.

A corporate Wild Work Day took place in the lodge garden and Events and Promotions Officer, Megan Shersby, managed to find four new galls and rusts for the site on the garden plants including Red valerian Gall (*Trioza centranthi*), Light House Gall (*Rondanola bursaria*), Ground Ivy Rust (*Puccinia glechomatis*) and Hollyhock/Mallow Rust (*Puccinia malvacearum*).

Specimens from the moth traps were sent off for identification as part of the Adult Caddisfly Occurrence Scheme, run by Stuart Croft. From this, eleven species were recorded, of which *Ceraclea nigronervosa* and *Agrypnia varia* were new to the site. This brings the Trichoptera site total to 52.

Sawflies are being identified by Kev Rowley more frequently this year and seven new species were added to the species list. Most of these were grassland species including *Dolerus niger*, *Cephus spinipes* and *Cephus pygmaeus*, bringing the sawfly total for the site to 30.

Last year, specimens of nocturnal Ichneumonidae wasps were sent off for identification for a PhD study at the Natural History Museum. The results recorded eight species, six of which were new to the site. Another new ichneumon, *Ibalia leucospoides*, was recorded this year from the moth traps by Tim Newton. This, with the sawflies brings the combined hymenoptera site total to 153.

Mostly identified on the survey days and aquatic invertebrate surveys, 104 species of Coleoptera were recorded this year, 14 of which are new to the site. This brings the coleoptera species total to 446.

Sixty-eight species of Hemiptera were recorded this year, mostly from the survey days, nine of these were new to the site, bringing the site total up to 128 species. One of these was the Red Valerian Gall, *Trioza centranthi*, although the adult has not been



Blue Shieldbug, Zicrona caerulea
© Robin Gossage

recorded on site, just the gall. Another notable bug recorded was the Apple Lace Bug *Physatocheilus smreczynskii*, recorded by Bob Gill on the survey days at The Point. This is a nationally notable species, confined to the south of England and is associated with lichen covered apple trees. Although not new to the reserve, Robin Gossage recorded *Zicrona caerulea*. It is a species that was recorded before the site records were digitised in 2014, therefore we do not have an exact date or more information about the record so it is nice to re-record it. It is an unusual species in that it predates leaf beetles and caterpillars rather than feeding on plants.

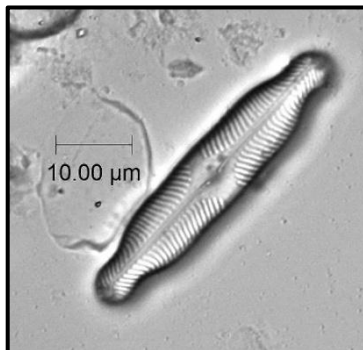
Unusually, two new species of spider were recorded from the survey days at The Point by Robin Gossage and Bob Gill, taking the site total to 126.

A new springtail, *Pogonognathellus longicornis*, was also recorded on the April survey day by Bob Gill, bringing the site total up to three.

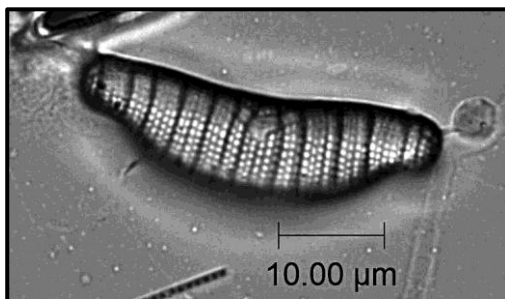
Algae

Chris Carter

As featured in past reports, the new ponds at Christies' Copse have been particularly productive as regards algal study; the filamentous green *Oedogonium pusillum* has been one of the highlights and is still present in a reproductive phase. This pond is low in the nutrients that can encourage aggressive invading algae whilst apparently being conducive to a developing array of interesting species; even now, new site diatoms are being identified in specially prepared samples and this is on-going.



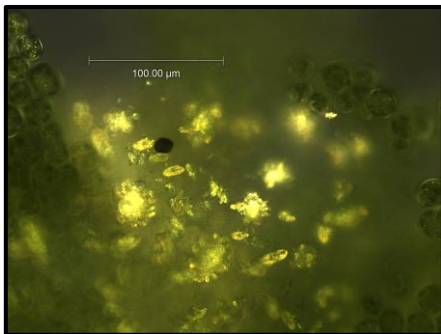
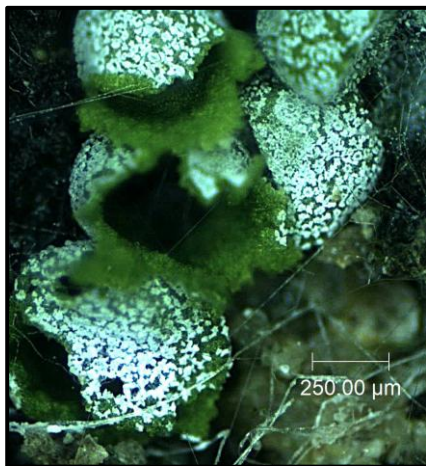
The diatom Pinnularia grunowii from a pond at Christies' Copse. The side walls are triundulate – one of the key features of this species.



The diatom Epithemia adnata from Walgrave Round Pond; the small sphere attached by a short stalk on the right is a parasitic chytrid fungus; probably impossible to name. This 'frustule' has been obtained after removal of organic matter from the sample and shows the complex patterning in the silica ("glass").

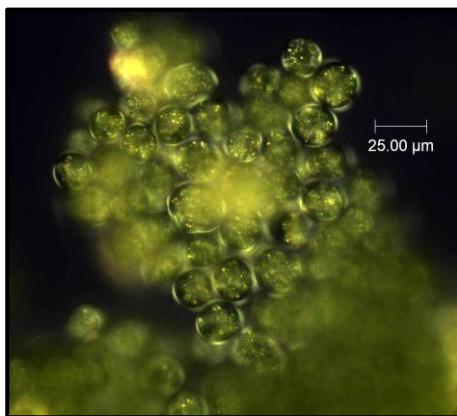
The Walgrave ponds have always been a priority and this has been the case this year. It is likely that repeated water-level changes have flushed away older enriched water that was later replaced by clean water; this allowed a restoration of the algal diversity.

The Point was visited during draw-down at the suggestion of the site manager; it was particularly good to find the little-recorded xanthophyte alga *Botrydium granulatum*, last seen in the 2011 and 2022 drawdowns. There were also some interesting diatoms.



Top left: part of a colony showing lime encrustation.

Top right – detached 'calcite' encrustation under crossed polaroids showing crystalline nature.



Bottom left: part of a colony under polaroid.



The diatom *Cymatopleura elliptica* in drawdown mud at 'The Point' in August. The ridged punctate silica structure is seen here at two levels. The images on the right (reduced scale) are diagonal and side views that show this ridged structure at two focus points.

© All images are courtesy of Chris Carter.

The table below shows new records of algal species for Pitsford Water Nature Reserve for 2025. Left columns are new to the section and right columns are new to the site. H= Holcot Pond, S= Spring Pond, W,R,C= Walgrave Square and Round and Crescent ponds, M=main reservoir, Ch= Christies' Copse main pond.

	All sections New	
CYANOPHYTA (blue-green algae)		
<i>Anabaena catenata</i>	C	R
<i>Cylindrospermum stagnale</i>		Ch
<i>Nostoc coeruleum</i>	C	W
<i>Oscillatoria tenuis</i>		R
<i>Pseudanabaena redekei</i>	Ch	Ch, R
CRYPTOPHYTA		
<i>Cryptomonas ovata</i>	M	Ch
DYNOPHYTA		
<i>Peridinium aciculiferum</i>		Ch
EUGLENOPHYTA		
<i>Euglena repulsans</i>		Ch
<i>Trachelomonas hispida</i>	M	R
<i>Trachelomonas woycickii</i>	C	Ch
XANTHOPHYTA (yellow-green algae)		
<i>Tribonema affine</i>		Ch
<i>Tribonema minus</i>	W,M,S	R
CHLOROPHYTA (green algae)		
<i>Aphanochaete repens</i>	M,W,S	Ch
<i>Botryococcus braunii</i>	W,M,C	Ch
<i>Keratococcus suecicus</i>		Ch
<i>Kirchneriella obtusa</i>		Ch
<i>Nephroclytium limneticum</i>		Ch

<i>Palmodictyon varium</i>	M	Ch
<i>Pseudocharacium obtusum</i>		Ch
<i>Pseudostaurastrum enorme</i>		W
DESMIDS (green algal group)		
<i>Closterium actutum</i>	Ch	R
<i>Closterium parvulum</i>	W,M,C	R
<i>Cosmarium botrytis</i>	M	Ch
<i>Cosmarium margaritifereum</i>		Ch
<i>Cosmarium punctulatum</i> var. <i>subpunctulatum</i>		R
<i>Cosmarium subcrenatum</i>	M,Ch,C	Ch
<i>Cosmarium subprotumidum</i>	Ch,M	Ch,R
BACILLARIOPHYTA (diatoms)		
<i>Amphipleura pellucida</i>		R
<i>Encyonema ventricosum</i>		Ch
<i>Epithemia adnata</i>		R
<i>Gomphonema olivaceum</i>		R
<i>Navicula amphiceropsis</i>		Ch,
<i>Navicula cryptocephala</i>	M	R
<i>Neidium longiceps</i>		R
<i>Nitzschia palea</i>	M	Ch,R
<i>Nitzschia recta</i>	M	R
<i>Pinnularia grumowii</i>		Ch
<i>Planolithidium lanceolatum</i>		Ch

Bryophytes

Rachel Carter & Frances Higgs

The study days based in the Walgrave Bay area provided an opportunity for a thorough search of the Walgrave Stream as well as the surrounding area.

There were few existing records for the stream itself. Its banks were examined as far as possible, and epiphytes growing on trees rooted in or on the edge of the stream were included. This resulted in a substantial total list of 16 species, tabulated below.

Stream bank with *Pohlia melanodon* and the liverwort *Pellia endiviifolia* (arrowed).



Table 1: Bryophyte records for the Walgrave Stream and additions to the bryophyte records for Walgrave South (*).

<i>Amblystegium serpens</i>
<i>Bryum capillare</i>
<i>Cryphaea heteromalla</i>
<i>Fissidens taxifolius</i>
<i>Homalothecium sericeum</i>
<i>Hypnum cupressiforme</i>
<i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>
<i>Lunularia cruciata</i>

<i>Metzgeria furcata</i>
<i>Metzgeria violacea</i>
<i>Orthotrichum affine</i>
<i>Orthotrichum lyellii</i>
<i>Pellia endiviifolia</i>
<i>Plagiomnium undulatum</i>
<i>Platyhypnidium riparioides</i>
<i>Pohlia melanodon</i>

* <i>Brachythecium mildeanum</i>
* <i>Brachythecium rivulare</i>
* <i>Campylopus introflexus</i>
* <i>Leptodictyum riparium</i>
* <i>Mnium hornum</i>

In addition, the Walgrave Bay area was searched more widely, resulting in several new records for the Walgrave South section. One of these, *Mnium hornum*, is fairly common on acidic substrates (here it was on rotting wood) but has only been listed for Pitsford once before.

Christies' Copse was revisited as a follow-up to the study days in 2023 and 2024. The pond margins are steadily being colonised by vascular plants. However, all of the interesting bryophytes recorded previously were refound, albeit in smaller quantity. The *Pleuroidium subulatum* was in better condition than last year's material and was submitted as a voucher specimen, which was accepted, the first confirming its presence in Northamptonshire since about 1900. There was one new record for the area, *Riccardia chamedryfolia*, its identity confirmed by the presence of a single oil body in most cells. Previously it had been found on the margin of Crescent Pond before it became densely vegetated.

In September advantage was taken of the drawdown to look for bryophytes on the mud. There was little *Crassula* at The Point, but much of the mud was either dry and hard, or extremely soft, inaccessible, and bare-looking. However, two nice patches of wet mud were located. The typical reservoir edge species *Riccia cavernosa* and *Aphanorrhegma patens* were plentiful, and there was also a small amount of *Leptobryum pyriforme*. Although widespread on the drawdown, the first two of these had not been noted from The Point before.

Note on nomenclature: For the sake of consistency bryophyte names match those used in previous lists and reports; in some cases the currently accepted name is different. A master list for the site giving both is available.

Aquatic Invertebrates

Kev Rowley

There were two main recording efforts on site this year. John Showers and Simon Heywood continued with the Wildlife Trust Ecology Group monitoring of Walgrave Square Pond and I continued with the general recording across the whole site where I managed to sample in most water bodies. I also held a training workshop water bug identification course on site.

2025 has generated 303 records, 109 different species with 52 being water beetles, 23 water bugs and 34 water invertebrates. Six were new for the site. The overall aquatic invert species total now stands at 201, 96 of which are water beetles, 37 water bugs and 68 other aquatic invertebrates.



Hydaticus seminiger © Neil Phillips

A new record this year was for the Nationally Scarce *Hydaticus seminiger*. It is a really smart looking black water beetle with yellow flashes down it's sides. It is a fenland specialist usually

found amongst Fen Carr in permanent pools, often shaded. It was found in the Walgrave Star Scrape by Mark Webster while doing some practical sampling as part of my water bugs identification course. It is a strong flyer but its distribution is still confined to the South and East as well as the Cheshire Plain and Somerset Levels. There is another more common species called *Ilybius fuliginosis* that looks similar but this specimen was broader, bigger and with different features on the legs and around the eyes.

Five new species were added to the site list this year including Three-spined Stickleback, Bullhead and *Polycelis felina* (flatworm). These were found in Walgrave Stream as part of the site survey days. *Dryops ernasti* is a crawling water beetle that was expected to be on site but has only been recorded for the first time this year. *Hydroporus tessellatus* had a great year as conditions suited it with the wet spring and I was finding it in many other water bodies across the county.

The table shows the rarer aquatic invertebrates that have been found on site, with six of them being recorded in 2025.

Species	Status *	Found 2025	Site comments	Habitat	Succession	Management
<i>Agabus chalconatus</i> (Beetle)	NS		Found in Christies' Copse.	In shallow ditches and pools in woods and on heaths, typically in wheel ruts.	Late	Create temporary wet woodland areas.
<i>Aquarius paludum</i> (Bug)	NS	✓	Boat Dock, Holcot Bay.	Large lakes and reservoirs.	Mid	Will expand in habitat.
<i>Cercyon bifenestratus</i> (Beetle)	NS		Recorded once from Holcot Bay.	Flooded and exposed substratum, usually sand or mud.	Early	Keep some bare margins around site.
<i>Enochrus quadri-punctatus</i> (Beetle)	NS	✓	In flooded ephemeral areas at the bottom of the Walgrave Bay.	In open shallow, often clay bottomed pools.	Early	Create temporary wet areas.

Species	Status *	Found 2025	Site comments	Habitat	Succession	Management
<i>Helophorus dorsalis</i> (Beetle)	NT		Recorded once from a new flush in Walgrave Bay.	Small woodland pools, wheel ruts and seeps, often on clay.	Early	Retain wheel ruts and poached areas.
<i>Helophorus nanus</i> (Beetle)	NS	✓	Found in most features.	In Fen conditions amongst grasses and moss.	Early	Create temporary wet areas, maintain Phragmites.
<i>Helophorus strigifrons</i> (Beetle)	NS		Recorded from most features.	Temporary marshes with rush and sedge litter.	Early	Create temporary wet areas.
<i>Hydaticus transversalis</i> (Beetle)	NS		1 found in Walgrave Star Scrape.	Rich fen in lowland ponds and drainage ditches, exposed sites.	Early/mid	Create exposed and early successional sites.
<i>Hydaticus seminiger</i> (Beetle)	NS	✓	1 found in Walgrave Star Scrape	Fen carr and shaded pools	Early/mid	Create exposed and early successional sites.
<i>Hydrochus crenatus</i> (Beetle)	NT		One found in Scaldwell Stream	Fen species associated with fluctuating meres with much moss in their drawdown areas	Early/Mid	Encourage mossy areas on margins.
<i>Hydrochus elongatus</i> (Beetle)	NT	✓	Healthy population in reeds around the whole site.	In base rich fens, often reedbeds in lowland England.	Mid	Any removal of sedge beds in ponds do on a rotational basis, leave them present and leave on banks.
<i>Limnebius papposus</i> (Beetle)	NT		Found next to Scaldwell Stream	Amongst rotting vegetation in shallow water. Fens.	Late	Leave Willow Carr around site.
<i>Microvelia pygmaea</i> (Bug)	NS		Usually found in Spring Pond	Amongst emergent vegetation and litter around still and flowing water.	Late	Leave some shade over ponds.
<i>Rhantus frontalis</i> (Beetle)	NS	✓	Recorded regularly from the ponds.	Lowland pools amongst vegetation over exposed substrata in particular sand.	Early	Manage vegetation on rotation.

* NT= Near Threatened; NS= Nationally Scarce

Diptera

John Showers

The hot, dry summer meant that many species had very short flight periods, reducing the chances of their being recorded.

In all, 88 species were recorded with 13 being new to the reserve. This brings the total Diptera species count to 513.

New Species for the Site



Diogma glabrata, the July Tiger Damsel Crane fly breeds in mosses on stones in damp woods.
© John Showers.

Two new crane flies were added to the list. The July Tiger Damsel Crane fly, *Diogma glabrata*, breeds in mosses in damp woods. It is Nationally Notable. There are few records for this species in Northamptonshire.

Ilisiaoccoecata, Barred Twin-tail, is widespread but in low numbers. Its ecology is not well understood.

The Dark-winged Fungus Gnat, *Pseudolycoriella semialata*, is poorly recorded but there are records from the Huntingdon area. The family is only recorded by a few dipterists.

Tabanus autumnalis, Large Marsh Horsefly is widely distributed below a line from The Wash to The Severn Estuary. They breed in mud in ditches but are more common on coastal grasslands.

The Dance Fly, *Empis lutea* is a widespread, common species.

The Snipe Fly, *Chrysopilus laetus*, Tree Snipefly, breeds in porridge-like wood mould in the base of deciduous trees, particularly Beech. Its status is Near Threatened/Nationally Scarce.

Two new species of hoverfly were added, bringing the total hoverfly species count to 106. *Chrysotoxum festivum* is associated with grasslands and woodland edges. *Pipiza austriaca* is a widespread but local species. The larvae feed on aphids on plants such as Hogweed. It is associated with woodland edges and lush grasslands.



Chrysopilus laetus nationally scarce species recorded in July from the moth traps.
© John Showers.

Two new Anthomyiids were added but these are common species.

One Muscid, *Drymeia vicana* was added.

The Locust Blowfly (Calliphoridae) *Stomorrhina lunata*, photographed by Robin Gossage (front cover), is a migrant to the UK. It is increasingly being found in southern England, probably because of climate change. On the continent it parasitises the egg pods of locusts but it is not known if it parasitises any UK orthoptera.

Also photographed by Robin was the Black and Orange Parasitic Fly *Nowickia ferox*. Its larvae parasitise some Noctuid moths.

Moth trap by-catch

Only a few samples of Diptera were taken this year. However, new species were added to the site list and are reported above. In total 29 Diptera species were recorded from the traps in 2025.

My thanks go to Kev Rowley, Robin Gossage and Lisa Rowley for their records and Bob Gill and Mischa Cross for collection of diptera from the moth traps.

John Showers, Northants County Recorder for Diptera.

All species recorded in 2025. New species are indicated with ★

NEMATOCERA		
TIPULIDAE (Long-palped Craneflies)		
	Nephrotoma appendiculata	(Pierre, 1919)
	Nephrotoma flavescens	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Nephrotoma quadrifaria	(Meigen, 1824)
	Tipula fascipennis	Meigen, 1818
	Tipula helvola	Loew, 1873
	Tipula lunata	Linnaeus, 1758
	Tipula obsoleta	Meigen, 1818
	Tipula pagana	Meigen, 1819
	Tipula oleracea	Linnaeus, 1758
	Tipula paludosa	Meigen, 1830
	Tipula lateralis	Meigen, 1804
CYLINDROTOMIDAE (Damsel Craneflies)		
★	Diogma glabrata	(Meigen, 1818)
LIMONIIDAE (Short-palped Craneflies)		
CHIONEINAE		
	Gnophomyia viridipennis	(Gimmerthal, 1847)
	Ilisia maculata	(Meigen, 1804)
★	Ilisia occoecata	Edwards, 1936
LIMNOPHILINAE		
	Austrolimnophila ochracea	(Meigen, 1804)
LIMONIINAE		
	Limonia phragmitidis	(Schrank, 1781)
BIBIONIDAE (St Mark's Flies and Fever Flies)		

	Bibio marci	(Linnaeus, 1758)
SCIARIDAE (Black-winged Fungus Gnats)		
★	Pseudolycoxia semialata	(Edwards, 1913)
TRICHO CERIDAE (Winter Gnats)		
	Trichocera annulata	Meigen, 1818
	Trichocera major	(Linnaeus, 1758)
ANISOPODIDAE (Wood Gnats)		
	Sylvicola fuscatus	(Fabricius, 1775)
BRACHYCERA		
RHAGIONIDAE (Snipe Flies)		
	Chrysopilus cristatus	(Fabricius, 1775)
★	Chrysopilus laetus	Zetterstedt, 1842
	Rhagio scolopaceus	(Linnaeus, 1758)
TABANIDAE (Horse and Deer Flies)		
	Chrysops relictus	Meigen, 1820
	Haematopota pluvialis	(Linnaeus, 1758)
★	Tabanus autumnalis	Linnaeus, 1761
	Tabanus bromius	Linnaeus, 1758
XYLOMYIDAE (Wood Soldierflies)		
	Solva marginata	(Meigen, 1820)
STRATIOMYIDAE (Soldier Flies)		
BERIDINAE		

	Beris chalybata	(Forster, 1771)
BOMBYLIIDAE (Bee Flies)		
	Bombylius major	Linnaeus, 1758)
ASILIDAE (Robber Flies)		
	Leptogaster cylindrica	(De Geer, 1776)
EMPIDIDAE (Dance Flies)		
EMPIDINAE		
	Empis livida	Fabricius, 1794
★	Empis lutea	Meigen, 1804
DOLICHOPODIDAE (Long-legged Flies)		
DOLICHOPODINAE		
	Dolichopus festivus	Haliday, 1832
	Dolichopus plumipes	(Scopoli, 1763)
	Dolichopus wahlbergi	Zetterstedt, 1843
RHAPHIINAE		
	Rhaphium elegantulum	(Meigen, 1824)
SYRPHIDAE (Hoverflies)		
	Cheilosia albitarsis	(Meigen, 1822)
	Cheilosia impressa	Loew, 1840
	Cheilosia pagana	(Meigen, 1822)
	Chrysotoxum bicinctum	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Chrysotoxum cautum	(Harris, [1776])
★	Chrysotoxum festivum	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Epistrophe eligans	(Harris, [1780])
	Episyrphus balteatus	(De Geer, 1776)
	Eristalis arbustorum	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Eristalis intricaria	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Eristalis nemorum	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Eristalis pertinax	(Scopoli, 1763)
	Eristalis tenax	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Helophilus hybridus	Loew, 1846
	Helophilus pendulus	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Leucozona lucorum	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Melanostoma mellinum	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Melanostoma scalare	(Fabricius, 1794)

	Meliscaeva auricollis	(Meigen, 1822)
	Myathropa florea	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Neoscasia podagrica	(Fabricius, 1785)
★	Pipiza austriaca	Meigen, 1822
	Pipiza noctiluca	Linnaeus, 1758
	Platycheirus albimanus	(Fabricius, 1781)
	Platycheirus clypeatus	(Meigen, 1822)
	Platycheirus manicatus	(Meigen, 1822)
	Sphaerophoria scripta	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Sphaerophoria taeniata	(Meigen, 1822)
	Syrirta pipiens	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Syrphus ribesii	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Volucella bombylans	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Volucella pellucens	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Xylota segnis	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Xylota sylvarum	(Linnaeus, 1758)
CONOPIIDAE (Thick-headed Flies)		
	Physocephala rufipes	(Fabricius, 1781)
ULIDIIDAE (Picture-winged Flies)		
	Melieria crassipennis	(Fabricius, 1794)
TEPHRITIDAE (Gall Flies)		
	Urophora cardui	(Linnaeus, 1758)
	Tephritis hyoscyami	(Linnaeus, 1758))
	Xyphosia miliaria	(Schrank, 1781)
LAUXANIDAE		
	Pseudolyciella stylata	Papp, 1978
SCIOMYZIDAE (Snail-killing Flies)		
★	Coremacera marginata	(Fabricius, 1775)
	Ilione albiseta	(Scopoli, 1763)
	Tetanocera arrogans	Meigen, 1830

	Tetanocera hyalipennis	Von Roser, 1840
OPOMYZIDAE (Shoot Flies)		
	Opomyza florum	(Fabricius, 1794)
HELEOMYZIDAE		
	Suillia bicolor	(Zetterstedt, [1838])
DROSOPHILIDAE (Vinegar Flies)		
	Drosophila suzukii	(Matsumura, 1931)
SCATHOPHAGIDAE (Dung Flies)		
	Scathophaga stercoraria	Linnaeus, 1758)
ANTHOMYIIDAE		
★	Hylemyia urbana	Van der Wulp, 1896
★	Hylemyia variata	(Fallén, 1823)
MUSCIDAE (House Flies etc)		
★	Drymeia vicana	(Harris, [1870])

	Hydrotaea cyrtoneurina	(Zetterstedt, 1845)
	Eudasyphora cyanella	(Meigen, 1826)
	Musca autumnalis	De Geer, 1776
POLLENIIDAE (Cluster Flies)		
	Pollenia angustigena	Wainwright, 1940
HINIIDAE (Nose Flies)		
★	Stomorhina lunata	(Fabricius, 1805)
TACHINIDAE (Parasitic Flies)		
	Eriothrix rufomaculata	De Geer, 1776
	Phasia hemiptera	(Fabricius, 1794)
★	Nowickia ferox	(Panzer, [1809])
	Tachina fera	(Linnaeus, 1761)



Nowickia ferox © Robin Gossage

Fungi

Jeff Blincow

This was a limited year of recording because of the dry state of most habitats when the site was visited. The warm, dry conditions lasted well into the autumn to extend the dry conditions longer than normal. The only new species *Mycena crocata* was found in good numbers on fallen dead beech wood left from recent clearance work.



Mycena crocata © Jeff Blincow

The meadows produced few of the recent grassland specialist found on the reserve. The yellow coloured waxcap, *Hygrocybe quieta* - Oily Waxcap, was the commonest species seen. The easiest species to record in the woodland was *Bulgaria inquinans* - Black Bulgar. It enjoyed forming in all the recent cut wood and its fruit-bodies can stay fertile in the dry conditions. In recent years, the need to consider the conditions and timing of visits to maximise recording has become an important issue for fungi. The late September and October period were

favoured last century. Now there are more fungi to be found in a wetter summer and later autumn.



Daedaleopsis confragosa © Jeff Blincow

Daedaleopsis confragosa - Blushing Bracket, usually found associating with Willow species. This specimen was found on Oak where it forms a more layered structure.

Lichens

Rachel Carter

The trees bordering the Walgrave Stream have a rich and varied lichen population; the sheltered, humid habitat provides good conditions for epiphytic growth. There was spectacular tree coverage by *Ramalina farinacea*, shown in the pictures below.



Ramalina farinacea

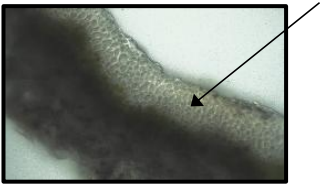
© Rachel Carter

There was already a good set of lichen records for the Walgrave Stream, not surprisingly all epiphytes. Some were made by Tom Chester and Ivan Pedley in 1997; these included *Usnea subfloridana*, a fruticose lichen, which is sensitive to pollution and is now very rare in the county. It was not refound. A further tranche of records dates from 2006, when nitrophilous species such as *Xanthoria parietina* were beginning to dominate. Two *Physcias* were added this year, together with several other nitrogen-tolerant species, and the more sensitive *Parmotrema perlatum*.

A small patch of a foliose lichen with narrow lobes is a *Physconia* species. It is grey with the characteristic white powdery appearance of this genus; the underside is pale with black rhizines (root-like structures). Microscopic examination was necessary to identify the species, *Physconia enteroxantha*; the cells in the upper layer of the thallus are circular in cross-section.



Right: *Physconia enteroxantha*
Below: cross-section of thallus, circular cells arrowed



Greenish-grey patches of powdery granules on shaded bark were identified as *Lepraria lobificans*, which is a new record for the site. It was distinguished from the duller bluish-grey *Lepraria incana*, which is also present, by chemical tests.

Table 1: Additions to the lichen records for Walgrave Stream made in 2025
All were on bark. New species are indicated with ★.

<i>Arthonia radiata</i>
<i>Lecidella elaeochroma</i> f. <i>eleaochroma</i>
★ <i>Lepraria lobificans</i>

<i>Parmelia sulcata</i>
<i>Parmotrema perlatum</i>
<i>Phaeophyscia orbicularis</i>
<i>Physcia adscendens</i>

<i>Physcia tenella</i>
★ <i>Physconia enteroxantha</i>

In addition to the thorough search at the Walgrave Stream, casual recording added three records to the list for The Point:

Hypogymnia physodes
Parmelia sulcata
Ramalina farinacea

This is only the second record of *Hypogymnia physodes* for Pitsford; it was recorded in the Walgrave North area in 1997.

Micro Moths

Kev Rowley

There were 72 species recorded this year, with three being new to the site, bring the site total up to 378 species. This is thanks to the efforts of Bob Gill, Fiona Barclay and Theresa de la Fuente, with most records coming from the moth traps and survey days, plus microscope examination of some species by Mark Hammond.

The new species are:

Coleophora anatipennella found on the 20th June. This is commonly called the Pistol Case Bearer as it's larval case resembles an old flintlock pistol shape. The larval food plants are Blackthorn and Hawthorn, which are numerous on site.

Metzneria metzneriella found on the 14th June. Known from grassland and ride edges, the larvae feed on knapweed and Saw-wort.

Stigmella basiguttella found on the 7th September, commonly known as Shoulder Spot Dot. It was found by Theresa de la Fuente as a leaf mine on oak.



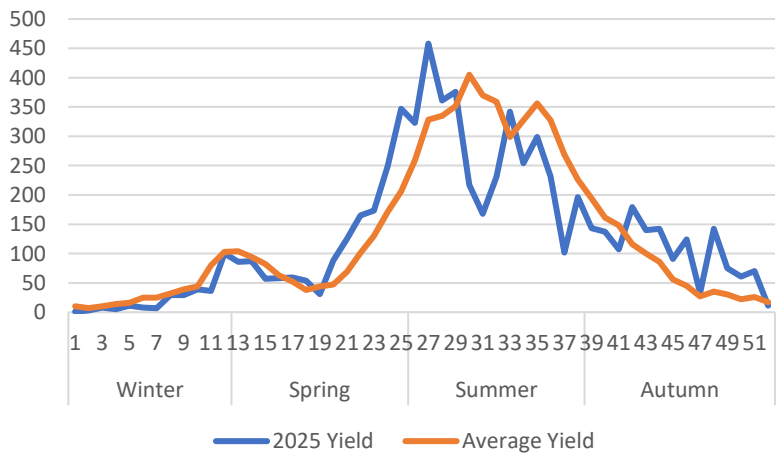
Stigmella basiguttella
© Theresa de la Fuente.

Macro Moths

Mischa Cross

Summary

Overall, a much better year than last year with a yield of 7098 moths, where the long-term average is 6877. A remarkable 292 species were recorded, which is well above the average annual species count of 272. In recent years, the moths appear to be in a state of flux. The past few years have seen numerous new species – this year has seen five new species: Black-spotted Chestnut, Clancy’s Rustic, Gypsy Moth, Jersey Tiger and Marbled Brown. Many new or infrequent species are hugely increasing in abundance, while others, even some previously very common species, are declining.



The weekly yield in 2025 compared to the average. The summer season started early and with good numbers, but showed some unusual peaks and troughs. The autumn was generally above average but very variable.

NOTE: All species are assigned a flight season depending on when they finish flying – not when they emerge. For example, Early Thorn emerges in Spring but is double brooded and stops

flying in Autumn, therefore, for the purposes of this and future reports, it is classed as an autumn species. See table at the end of this report for the season classification for each species. As a result, the following season analyses will monitor the same species each time, unless otherwise stated.

Winter 2024/ 25

This winter was relatively cold throughout, but with only a few short spells of hard frosts. It was also extremely wet and with hardly any sunshine. The winter moth yield was 375 from 15 species, where the average is 498. It was quite a poor season, with the Chestnuts and Satellites being considerably down. 20% of the species that are classed as 'winter species', ie, fly in the winter months or over winter as adults, were below average. 27% were above average and 53% were around their average for the site.

Spring

The spring was dry but relatively cool, especially in the evenings. The traps were fairly low in species and abundance until week 19 – early May. From this point, many of the summer and autumn finishing species that emerge in spring started to appear in fairly large numbers. Of the 25 spring species recorded on site this year, 44% were average, 24% were below average and 32% above average with a yield of 512, where the average is 649. The average flight period for these species in weeks was 5.3, which is below average.

The typically abundant spring species; Common Quaker, Clouded Drab, Hebrew Character, and Powdered Quaker were all around half their average. Even the Small Quaker, which has been doing continuously well for many years now, was only around average, as was the Twin-spotted Quaker.



*Lunar Marbled Brown next to a mating pair of *Platyrhinous resinosus* beetles. © Mischa Cross*

The Brindled Beauty is continuing to increase, with this year seeing its highest yield. The Oak Beauty also continues to do well, but has dropped slightly since its huge peak last year, as has the Lunar Marbled Brown. Blossom Underwing, Mullein and Small Brindled Beauty are all sporadic species on site and were recorded this year.

Although it is classified as a summer species, low numbers of Marbled Browns were recorded for the first time on site this spring.

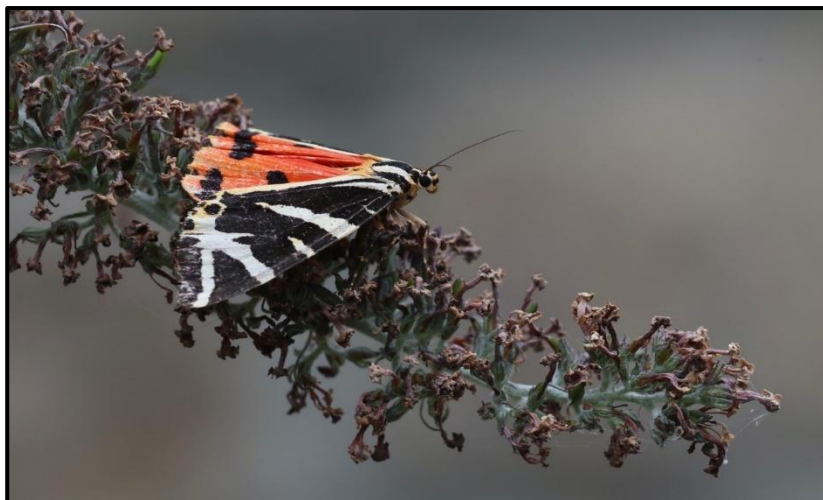
Summer

The weather this summer was very hot and dry, with several heatwaves and virtually no rain locally all summer – almost polar opposite to last summer with its cool and wet weather. Last summer recorded the lowest yield, but thankfully, this year, summer numbers were back up to average for the season with a yield of 2653. Of the 151 summer species recorded, 38%

were above average, 40% were average and only 22% were below their average for the site.

Species diversity and abundance was greater earlier in the season, but dropped off rapidly at the end of July, whereas on average it tends to increase as the season progresses. This is most likely due to the intense drought and reduced vegetation and nectar sources by this point.

The unpredictable weather each year, and even each season has probably contributed to what appears to be much dispersal of species nationally. Unusual migrants and species that are typically in geographically confined populations are popping up around the country and Pitsford has had its fair share this year with our first Gypsy Moth, which was first recorded in the county in 2020. Another new species this summer was the Jersey Tiger. It was first recorded in the county in 2018. Both these species were previously confined to the south coast and appear to be colonising the county well.



Jersey Tiger © Dave Jackson

Many species that have recently moved into the county have colonised Pitsford over the last decade or so— see annual report 2021. But this summer has also seen the return of some sporadic species that may be future colonisers or just at the start of their colonisation of the site, such as Latticed Heath, Lackey and the Four-spotted Footman. Although they are not new species to the reserve, sightings are becoming more frequent - the Latticed Heath recorded a yield of four and was seen over a three-week period, whereas previous years only singletons were recorded.



Four-spotted Footman
© Mischa Cross

A couple of the species that recorded record low yields last summer are back up to average, including Brown Rustic, Shoulder-striped Wainscot and Dingy Shears. Unfortunately others, including the Heart and Dart, Rustic Shoulder Knot and Middle-barred Minor recorded very low yields and although up this year, are still below average and are showing strong declining trends on site. The Ingrailed Clay wasn't as noticeably affected last year, but has recorded its lowest count since 2008 this year and the Ghost Moth was alarmingly absent from the traps for the first time this year.



Swallow-tailed Moth
© Mischa Cross

Thankfully, some species are going from strength to strength in recent years with the Black Arches, Coronet, Elephant Hawkmoth, Iron Prominent, Poplar Hawkmoth, Scarlet Tiger, Swallow-tailed Moth and Treble Brown Spot all recording their highest yields this year.

Autumn

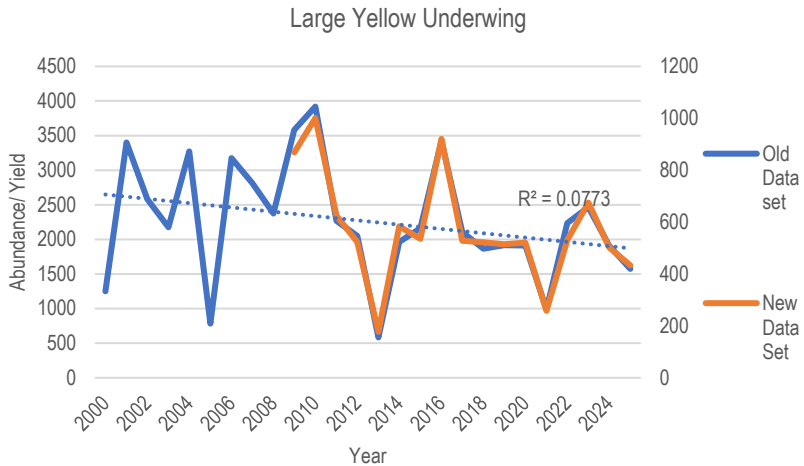
The warm, dry weather continued into late autumn and likely contributed to many species trying their luck at a second or third brood. The Light Emerald has been having consistently increasing late broods for some years now, but was joined by Yellow-tail, Swallowtail, Heart and Dart, Dark Arches, Dwarf Cream Wave, Least Carpet, Mottled Rustic, Scarce Silver-lines, Treble Lines and Short-cloaked Moth. The average flight season for autumn species is 10.9 weeks but was 12.3 this year.

Despite the longer than average season, the overall yield was below average with a total yield of 2884, where the average is 3061. However, the number of species recorded was significantly up with 99 autumn species recorded where the average is 86. This is due to the late broods and longer flight seasons, but also, numerous species that are recorded sporadically have been seen this year such as Small Emerald, Small Mottled Willow, Clay Triple Lines and August Thorn plus numerous recently colonised species such as Clifden Nonpareil, Dark Crimson Underwing, Dewick's Plusia and Dark Spectacled Moth. Another two new species were recorded, Clancy's Rustic, which is possibly a recent colonist in the county and the Black Spotted Chestnut, although technically this is a 'winter' species and will be covered in the winter 2025/26 chapter in next year's report.



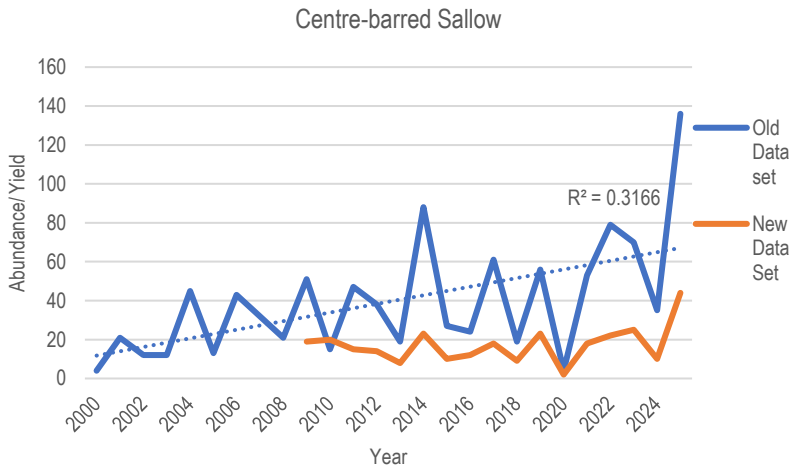
Small Emerald
© Mischa Cross

Of the 99 autumn species recorded, approximately 41% of them were above average, 38% were average and only 21% were below average, but this did include some very low counts for some of the typically more abundant species for the site, including the Flame Shoulder, Large Yellow Underwing, Lesser Yellow Underwing and Setaceous Hebrew Character.

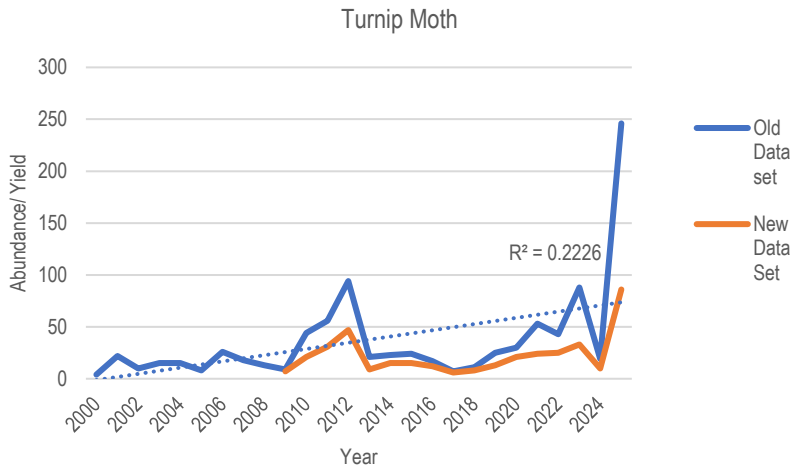


A comparison of the new and old data sets for the Large Yellow Underwing, showing a poor year, but overall the population on site appears stable but with some occasional large drops in numbers.

The sallows and quakers on the whole, also didn't do very well this year, with exception of the Centre Barred Sallow, which had its best year on record.

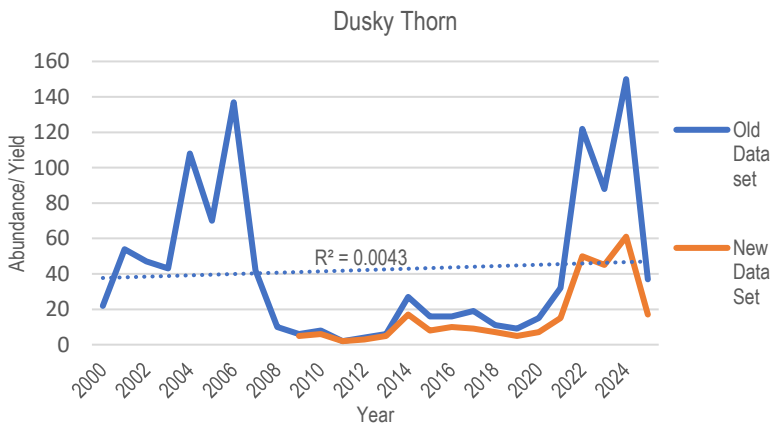


A comparison of the new and old data sets for the Centre-barred Sallow, showing a record year for the species and an increasing trend on site.



A comparison of the new and old data sets for the Turnip Moth, showing a record year for the species and an increasing trend on site

The Turnip moth also had a record year, but one species whose trend follows a very unusual pattern is the Dusky Thorn. It appears to have incredible, short-lived peaks, then crashes and takes several years to recover, showing how vital long-tern data is.



A comparison of the new and old data sets for the Dusky Thorn, showing an unusual pattern of peaks and troughs.

All the species recorded from the traps in 2025, with their designated Pitsford season, first and last dates and the 2025 yield compared to the average. New species are indicated with ★.

Species	Pitsford season class	First Date	Last Date	Yield	Average yield
Alder Moth	Summer	26-May	26-May	1	1
Angle Shades	Autumn	15-Apr	28-Dec	32	40
August Thorn	Autumn	01-Jul	10-Jul	3	0
Barred Sallow	Autumn	18-Sep	11-Nov	16	29
Barred Straw	Summer	17-Jun	02-Jul	11	10
Beaded Chestnut	Autumn	24-Sep	03-Nov	26	50
Beautiful Golden Y	Summer	14-Jun	01-Jul	3	4
Beautiful Hook-tip	Summer	13-Jun	04-Sep	10	7
Blackneck	Summer	21-Jun	21-Jun	1	0
Black Arches	Summer	20-Jun	07-Aug	89	19
Black Rustic	Autumn	15-Sep	12-Nov	18	15
★ Black-spotted Chestnut	Winter	23-Dec	23-Dec	1	0
Blair's Shoulder-knot	Autumn	02-Oct	02-Nov	4	7
Blossom Underwing	Spring	08-Apr	25-Apr	2	0
Blood-vein	Autumn	03-Jun	25-Aug	16	15
Blue Bordered Carpet	Summer	14-Jun	18-Jun	2	0
Bordered Beauty	Autumn	22-Jul	24-Jul	3	2
Brick	Autumn	19-Sep	15-Dec	34	14
Bright-line Brown-eye	Summer	21-May	22-Aug	16	24
Brimstone Moth	Autumn	28-Apr	16-Oct	70	77
Brindled Beauty	Spring	19-Mar	28-Apr	28	6
Brindled Green	Autumn	04-Sep	20-Oct	12	6
Brindled Pug	Spring	12-Apr	18-Apr	4	6
Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	Autumn	30-Jun	19-Oct	44	36
Brown Rustic	Summer	11-May	06-Jul	41	51
Brown-line Bright-eye	Summer	23-Jun	27-Jul	15	11
Brown Silver-line	Summer	21-Jun	21-Jun	1	0
Brown-spot Pinion	Autumn	02-Oct	02-Oct	1	8
Brown-tail	Summer	20-Jun	06-Aug	6	1
Buff Arches	Summer	16-Jun	04-Jul	8	18
Buff Ermine	Summer	23-May	25-Jul	22	24
Buff Footman	Summer	25-Jun	30-Jul	16	24
Buff Tip	Summer	12-May	10-Aug	46	22
Bulrush Wainscot	Summer	22-Jul	26-Sep	2	1
Burnished Brass	Autumn	05-Jun	11-Sep	19	24
Canary-shouldered Thorn	Autumn	18-Jul	01-Sep	6	11
Centre-barred Sallow	Autumn	13-Aug	23-Sep	44	17
Chestnut	Winter	28/09/2024	12/04/2025	60	118
Chinese Character	Summer	17-Apr	29-Aug	10	8
Chocolate-tip	Summer	16-Apr	21-Apr	3	2
Cinnabar	Summer	16-May	08-Jul	18	10
★ Clancy's Rustic	Autumn	26-Sep	19-Oct	2	0

Species	Pitsford season class	First Date	Last Date	Yield	Average yield
Clay	Summer	20-Jun	17-Jul	4	9
Clay Triple-lines	Autumn	19-Aug	19-Aug	1	0
Clifden Nonpareil	Autumn	23-Aug	02-Oct	12	2
Cloaked Minor	Summer	26-Jun	11-Aug	17	11
Clouded Border	Summer	10-Jun	02-Jul	4	7
Clouded Brindle	Summer	06-Jun	30-Jun	6	3
Clouded Drab	Spring	22-Feb	29-Apr	55	95
Clouded Silver	Summer	01-Jun	30-Jun	7	6
Clouded-bordered Brindle	Summer	07-May	14-Jun	9	7
Common Carpet	Autumn	31-May	24-Aug	9	10
Common Emerald	Summer	14-Jun	29-Jun	11	7
Common Footman	Summer	16-Jun	30-Jul	105	121
Common Marbled Carpet	Autumn	20-May	06-Oct	8	12
Common Pug	Summer	02-May	21-Jun	7	4
Common Quaker	Spring	22-Feb	26-Apr	78	141
Common Rustic agg.	Summer	15-Jun	29-Aug	184	157
Common Swift	Summer	24-May	09-Jun	8	12
Common Wainscot	Autumn	13-May	01-Oct	276	162
Common Wave	Summer	20-Jul	30-Aug	7	9
Common White Wave	Summer	02-May	14-Aug	4	3
Copper Underwing agg.	Autumn	09-Jul	18-Sep	36	26
Coronet	Summer	26-Apr	25-Aug	44	8
Coxcomb Prominent	Summer	05-May	29-Jul	4	5
Cream Bordered Green Pea	Summer	18-Jun	27-Jul	3	6
Crescent	Summer	14-Jul	07-Aug	5	7
Cypress Carpet	Autumn	13-Jun	13-Jun	1	0
Dark Arches	Summer	29-May	18-Dec	134	194
Dark Chestnut	Winter	03/11/2024	06/01/2025	9	8
Dark Crimson Underwing	Autumn	25-Jul	05-Sep	2	1
Dark Spectacle	Autumn	15-Jun	19-Nov	4	1
Dark Sword-grass	Autumn	05-May	17-Dec	10	8
Dark-Barred Twin-spot Carpet	Summer	11-Jul	11-Jul	1	2.4
December Moth	Winter	19-Oct	11-Dec	79	46
Deep Brown Dart	Autumn	18-Sep	14-Nov	13	6.6
Delicate	Autumn	18-Sep	19-Nov	3	1
Dewick's Plusia	Autumn	11-Jul	10-Aug	2	1
Dingy Footman	Summer	03-Jul	20-Aug	39	73
Dingy Shears	Summer	17-Jun	29-Jun	4	6
Dotted Border	Spring	22-Feb	03-Apr	14	15
Double Lobed	Summer	29-Jun	16-Jul	4	13
Double Square Spot	Summer	13-Jun	18-Jul	39	94
Double-striped Pug	Summer	17-Apr	03-May	2	4
Drinker	Summer	12-Jun	22-Jul	8	13
Dun-bar	Summer	17-Jun	22-Aug	101	123
Dusky Sallow	Summer	29-Jun	30-Jul	16	13
Dusky Thorn	Autumn	11-Jul	19-Sep	17	16
Dwarf Cream Wave	Summer	17-Jun	08-Nov	11	1

Species	Pitsford season class	First Date	Last Date	Yield	Average yield
Early Grey	Spring	11-Apr	11-Apr	1	2
Early Moth	Winter	14-Jan	22-Feb	6	3
Early Thorn	Autumn	25-Mar	26-Aug	10	12
Elephant Hawkmoth	Summer	19-May	20-Jul	55	23
Engrailed	Autumn	21-Mar	05-Jul	8	3
Eyed Hawkmoth	Autumn	23-May	14-Aug	10	11
Fan-foot	Summer	30-Jun	30-Jul	3	2
Feathered Thorn	Autumn	08-Oct	28-Nov	44	35
Fen Wainscot	Summer	30-Jun	11-Jul	2	1
Figure of Eighty	Summer	30-May	18-Jun	2	3
Flame	Summer	12-Jun	10-Jul	5	20
Flame Carpet	Autumn	18-Jun	21-Aug	3	2
Flame Shoulder	Autumn	17-Apr	01-Sep	56	128
Flounced Rustic	Summer	29-Jul	15-Sep	126	122
Four-dotted Footman	Summer	25-Jun	26-Jun	2	2
Four-spotted Footman	Summer	27-Aug	27-Aug	1	0
Foxglove Pug	Summer	30-Jun	30-Jun	1	0
Frosted Green	Spring	12-Apr	26-Apr	4	0
Frosted Orange	Autumn	11-Sep	26-Sep	3	7
Garden Carpet	Autumn	14-Oct	14-Nov	1	3
Gold spot	Autumn	29-May	29-May	1	2
Green Carpet	Autumn	12-May	06-Sep	20	30
Green Pug	Summer	25-Jun	25-Jun	1	4
Green Silver-lines	Summer	26-May	26-Jun	6	9
Green-brindled Crescent	Autumn	28-Sep	04-Nov	32	16
Grey Dagger Agg.	Autumn	27-May	19-Aug	10	2
Grey Pine Carpet	Autumn	02-May	02-Nov	19	19
Grey Shoulder-Knot	Autumn	autumn 2024	12/04/2025	3	4
★ Gypsy Moth	Summer	03-Aug	03-Aug	1	0
Heart and Club	Summer	10-Jun	27-Jun	5	5
Heart and Dart	Summer	20-May	14-Oct	56	102
Hebrew Character	Spring	26-Feb	11-May	89	150
Herald	Winter	30-Apr	25-Jul	2	7
Ingrailed Clay	Summer	01-Jun	21-Jun	7	23
Iron Prominent	Summer	20-Apr	18-Aug	23	11
★ Jersey Tiger	Summer	13-Aug	13-Aug	1	0
July Highflyer	Summer	05-Jul	19-Jul	7	9
Juniper Carpet	Autumn	27-Oct	27-Oct	1	1
Kent Black Arches	Summer	30-Jun	01-Jul	1	0
Knot Grass	Summer	14-Apr	28-Aug	13	5
Lackey	Summer	08-Jun	09-Jun	1	0
Large Nutmeg	Summer	18-May	26-Jun	21	19
Large Twin-spot Carpet	Summer	19-Jun	30-Jun	4	7
Large Wainscot	Autumn	15-Sep	04-Nov	7	5
Large Yellow Underwing	Autumn	26-May	11-Nov	433	572
Latticed Heath	Summer	11-Aug	25-Aug	4	0

Species	Pitsford season class	First Date	Last Date	Yield	Average yield
Least Black Arches	Summer	27-Apr	29-May	8	4
Least Carpet	Autumn	10-Jun	20-Oct	15	5
Least Yellow Underwing	Summer	18-Jul	18-Jul	1	8
Leopard Moth	Summer	25-Jun	11-Jul	4	3
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	Autumn	30-Jun	20-Oct	46	100
Lesser Swallow Prominent	Summer	23-Apr	20-Aug	5	10
Lesser Yellow Underwing	Autumn	06-Jul	19-Dec	54	77
Light Arches	Summer	05-Jun	06-Jul	11	20
Light Emerald	Autumn	20-May	15-Oct	69	39
Lilac Beauty	Summer	25-Aug	25-Aug	1	1
Lime Hawkmoth	Summer	22-Apr	06-Aug	7	5
Lime-speck Pug	Autumn	20-Jul	09-Sep	9	7
Lunar Marbled Brown	Spring	15-Apr	02-May	15	3
Lunar Underwing	Autumn	11-Sep	01-Nov	194	146
Lychnis	Autumn	28-May	20-Jul	3	1
Magpie	Autumn	10-Jul	18-Jul	2	2
Maiden's Blush	Autumn	13-May	09-Sep	8	6
Maple Prominent	Summer	27-May	22-Aug	9	5
Marbled Beauty	Summer	11-Aug	11-Aug	1	4
★ Marbled Brown	Summer	11-Apr	18-Apr	3	0
Marbled Minor agg.	Summer	12-May	06-Jul	53	50
Marbled White Spot	Summer	26-May	04-Jul	8	2
March Moth	Spring	19-Feb	11-Apr	25	34
Merville du Jour	Autumn	28-Sep	13-Nov	30	12
Middle-barred Minor	Summer	24-May	21-Jun	36	56
Miller	Summer	24-Jun	25-Jun	1	1
Mottled Beauty	Summer	05-Jun	01-Jul	25	17
Mottled Pug	Summer	02-May	14-Jun	6	6
Mottled Rustic	Autumn	27-May	20-Oct	21	21
Mottled UMBER	Winter	18/10/2024	16/01/2025	148	58
Mouse Moth	Autumn	18-Aug	08-Sep	2	6
Mullein	Spring	18-Apr	18-Apr	1	0
Muslin Footman	Summer	20-Jun	26-Jun	4	5
Muslin Moth	Spring	08-Apr	22-May	22	20
November Moth Agg.	Winter	06-Oct	24-Nov	113	81
Nutmeg	Autumn	17-Oct	17-Oct	1	3
Oak Beauty	Spring	22-Feb	03-Apr	29	19
Oak Eggar	Summer	12-Jul	12-Jul	1	0
Oak Hook-tip	Summer	18-Aug	12-Sep	3	2
Oak Processionary	Summer	19-Jul	20-Jul	6	0
Oak-tree Pug	Spring	11-May	11-May	1	1
Obscure Wainscot	Summer	31-May	31-May	1	0
Ochreous Pug	Spring	13-May	13-May	1	0
Old Lady	Autumn	09-Jul	26-Aug	2	2
Orange Footman	Summer	02-May	20-Jun	51	24
Orange Swift	Summer	15-Aug	25-Aug	4	5

Species	Pitsford season class	First Date	Last Date	Yield	Average yield
Pale Brindled Beauty	Winter	30/12/2024	06/03/2025	35	45
Pale Eggar	Autumn	04-Aug	26-Aug	4	1
Pale Mottled Willow	Autumn	18-Aug	13-Sep	3	4
Pale Pinion	Winter	21-Mar	17-May	5	4
Pale Prominent	Summer	26-Apr	25-Aug	21	13
Pale Tussock	Summer	26-Apr	16-Jun	20	20
Pale Shouldered Brocade	Summer	30-May	30-May	1	3
Peach Blossom	Summer	30-May	30-Jun	5	5
Pearly Underwing	Autumn	18-Jun	13-Nov	4	1
Pebble Hook-tip	Autumn	23-May	23-Jul	10	7
Pebble Prominent	Summer	22-Apr	12-Aug	27	19
Peppered Moth	Summer	17-May	10-Jul	13	19
Phoenix	Summer	06-Jul	06-Jul	1	2
Pine Beauty	Spring	16-Mar	14-May	4	9
Pine Carpet	Autumn	05-Jun	22-Oct	10	1
Pine Hawkmoth	Summer	26-May	03-Aug	11	12
Pink-barred Sallow	Autumn	24-Sep	28-Oct	5	10
Plain Golden Y	Summer	25-Jun	25-Jun	1	2
Poplar Grey	Summer	11-Jun	02-Aug	10	4
Poplar Hawkmoth	Summer	07-May	29-Aug	103	54
Poplar Kitten	Summer	28-Apr	16-Aug	7	3
Powdered Quaker	Spring	27-Mar	30-Apr	7	17
Privet Hawkmoth	Summer	23-May	14-Aug	9	16
Purple Thorn	Autumn	18-Apr	30-Aug	16	7
Red Chestnut	Spring	21-Mar	22-Apr	6	7
Red Twin-spot Carpet	Summer	30-Apr	06-Aug	6	5
Red Underwing	Autumn	31-Jul	16-Sep	4	7
Red-green Carpet	Winter	13/09/2024	07/05/2025	64	27
Red-line Quaker	Autumn	30-Sep	28-Nov	30	24
Riband Wave	Autumn	04-Jun	16-Sep	77	40
Rosy minor	Summer	01-Jul	01-Jul	1	1
Rosy Rustic	Autumn	23-Jul	10-Oct	14	33
Round-winged Muslin	Summer	30-Jun	30-Jun	1	12
Ruby Tiger	Summer	12-Apr	20-Sep	77	62
Rustic	Summer	12-Jun	29-Jul	19	28
Rustic Shoulder-knot	Summer	28-Apr	21-Jun	15	29
Sallow	Autumn	09-Sep	09-Nov	16	28
Sallow Kitten	Summer	09-Jul	11-Aug	7	6
Sandy Carpet	Summer	23-May	23-May	1	1
Satellite	Winter	06/10/2024	16/04/2025	38	31
Scalloped Hazel	Summer	23-May	03-Jun	2	2
Scalloped Oak	Summer	20-Jun	26-Jul	6	6
Scarce Bordered Straw	Autumn	02-Oct	02-Oct	1	1
Scarce Footman	Summer	24-Jun	06-Aug	34	33
Scarce Silver-lines	Summer	18-Jun	06-Oct	3	3
Scarce Umber	Autumn	30-Oct	02-Dec	32	6
Scarlet Tiger	Summer	30-May	11-Jul	53	2

Species	Pitsford season class	First Date	Last Date	Yield	Average yield
Scorched Carpet	Summer	30-Apr	30-Apr	1	0
Scorched wing	Summer	12-May	20-Jun	9	7
Setaceous Hebrew Character	Autumn	11-May	11-Nov	164	326
Shaded Broad-bar	Summer	10-Jul	02-Jul	4	2
Short-cloaked Moth	Summer	19-Jun	04-Sep	7	5
Shoulder Stripe	Spring	14-Mar	10-Apr	5	3
Shoulder-Striped Wainscot	Summer	30-May	30-Jun	12	17
Shuttle-shaped Dart	Autumn	20-Apr	29-Oct	20	21
Silver Y	Autumn	10-May	11-Nov	10	30
Silver Ground Carpet	Summer	20-May	16-Jun	6	10
Single Dotted Wave	Summer	30-May	04-Sep	27	20
Six-striped Rustic	Autumn	25-Jul	29-Aug	7	11
Slender Brindle	Summer	27-Jun	12-Jul	4	7
Slender Pug	Summer	25-Sep	25-Sep	1	0
Small Blood-vein	Autumn	30-Aug	31-Aug	2	1
Small Brindled Beauty	Spring	25-Feb	17-Mar	3	0
Small Clouded Brindle	Summer	20-May	20-Jun	11	15
Small Dotted Buff	Summer	01-Jul	07-Jul	2	3
Small Elephant Hawkmoth	Summer	30-May	21-Jun	3	1
Small Emerald	Autumn	16-Jun	16-Jun	1	0
Small Fan-footed Wave	Summer	17-Jun	09-Jul	11	28
Small Mottled Willow	Autumn	29-Jul	30-Jul	1	0
Small Phoenix	Summer	23-May	02-Aug	5	9
Small Quaker	Spring	05-Mar	20-Apr	92	102
Small Rufous	Summer	29-Jul	29-Jul	1	1
Small Scallop	Summer	02-Jul	03-Jul	1	2
Small Square Spot	Autumn	16-May	01-Sep	33	78
Smoky Wainscot	Summer	16-Jun	21-Jul	44	78
Snout	Autumn	01-Jun	14-Oct	50	91
Southern Wainscot	Summer	12-Jun	29-Jun	5	6
Spectacle	Autumn	15-May	02-Sep	18	16
Sprawler	Autumn	27-Oct	23-Nov	27	20
Spring Usher	Winter	18-Jan	23-Feb	15	6
Spruce Carpet	Autumn	23-Apr	07-Nov	18	19
Square Spot Rustic	Autumn	31-May	20-Oct	81	135
Straw Dot	Autumn	20-May	24-Sep	111	93
Straw Underwing	Summer	19-Jul	25-Aug	33	17
Swallow Prominent	Summer	15-Apr	09-Aug	14	15
Swallow-tailed Moth	Summer	18-Jun	03-Oct	24	8
Tawny Pinion	Winter	09-Mar	09-Mar	1	1
Tawny-barred Angle	Summer	30-May	16-Sep	6	3
Treble Brown Spot	Summer	24-May	21-Oct	19	3
Treble Lines	Summer	09-May	24-Jun	43	15
Tree Lichen Beauty	Autumn	11-Jul	06-Sep	10	3
Turnip Moth	Autumn	05-May	27-Nov	86	23
Twin-spotted Quaker	Spring	06-Mar	18-Apr	20	26
Twin-spotted Wainscot	Autumn	22-Jul	22-Jul	1	2

Species	Pitsford season class	First Date	Last Date	Yield	Average yield
Uncertain	Summer	09-Jun	06-Aug	53	111
Vapourer	Autumn	26-Jun	01-Oct	8	5
Vestal	Autumn	03-Sep	06-Nov	2	1
Vine's Rustic	Autumn	26-May	13-Nov	53	36
Water Carpet	Spring	12-Apr	21-Apr	2	1
Webb's Wainscot	Autumn	11-Aug	12-Aug	1	1
White Ermine	Summer	02-May	21-Jun	76	35
White Point	Autumn	02-Jun	12-Nov	61	5
White Satin Moth	Summer	25-Jun	16-Jul	6	9
White-spotted Pug	Summer	09-Aug	09-Aug	1	2
Willow Beauty	Autumn	26-May	12-Nov	61	30
Winter Moth	Winter	09/11/24	02/02/2025	44	60
Yellow Horned	Spring	20-Mar	20-Mar	1	1
Yellow Shell	Summer	20-Jul	06-Sep	6	2
Yellow-barred Brindle	Autumn	29-May	08-Aug	3	2
Yellow-line Quaker	Autumn	02-Oct	09-Dec	41	58
Yellow-tail	Summer	19-Jun	19-Oct	63	38



Brindled Beauty © Mischa Cross

Birds

Mischa Cross

There are two formal bird surveys that take place each year at Pitsford Water Nature Reserve: Common Bird Census (CBC) and Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). This is as well as casual observations and ringing sessions plus some small and large nest box checks on an ad hoc basis. The results from all of these surveys and observations are used to monitor each bird species and the overall health of the bird populations on site.

Summary

A real mix of good and bad news on site this year. The winter 2024/25 was the worst recorded since on site records start in 1994 and the WeBS data is showing a steadily declining trend for the reservoir. Thankfully, the CBC was relatively average, with all the usual species confirmed breeding in reasonable numbers. On the other end of the scale, the autumn drawdown brought incredible birds to the reservoir and good numbers of waders that have not been seen here for many years. This will be covered in more detail in the 2026 report as it falls under the winter of 2025/26.

Methodologies

Nest Box Scheme – There were 110 small-holed nest boxes on the nature reserve plus 11 Treecreeper boxes that were checked weekly throughout the breeding season. This stopped in 2023. From then, a smaller proportion of the boxes are checked when licenced volunteers are available. There are also 22 large nest boxes of various designs to suit different species including Tawny Owl, Barn Owl, Little Owl and Kestrels. When resources allow, these are checked approximately every third week by licenced bird ringers. Also included in the Pitsford Nest Box Scheme are the tern rafts and sand martin bank with

48 artificial holes, as they are also classed as artificial nesting sites.

Common Bird Census (CBC) – The survey method is based on the Common Bird Census (CBC) where six visits are made to the site between March and July and the surveyors walk the entire circuit of the reserve. Using one map per visit, every bird that is seen or heard is plotted in the relevant location. The surveys start at dawn and are made alternately clockwise and anti-clockwise to avoid timing bias. After the six visits, each species is re-mapped individually to establish breeding territories. There will be some bias towards highly vocal and visible birds, but this remains consistent through the years and the numbers produced cannot be taken as definitive counts of territories or breeding success, but used as a valuable comparative tool to establish long-term trends. This year the field surveys were carried out by Neil McMahon and Jonathon Sanders. Territory analysis carried out by Mischa Cross.

General Ringing - The nature reserve is used for casual ringing sessions. These sessions run when weather is suitable, subject to ringer availability. There are two main areas that are used for ringing sessions: Christies' Copse, which has a winter feeding station and target species here are Marsh and Willow Tits, and the feeding station in The Meadows where the target species are Tree Sparrows and Yellowhammers. There is also the duck trap at The Meadows feeding station that is set from time to time to target water birds. As well as providing important data to support the formal survey work and input into national databases, the ringing sessions also provide an opportunity to train new ringers and demonstrate bird ringing to reserve visitors.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) – The waterbirds and waders at Pitsford Reservoir are counted across the whole reservoir on a single day once a month, starting in August and continuing throughout the winter until March. A separate count

of the gull roost on the southern half of the reservoir is also taken each month. A minimum of two surveyors will walk simultaneously around the north and south half of the reservoir counting all birds seen on the water or using the habitat, for example, grazing on the banks. Birds seen flying overhead are not counted.

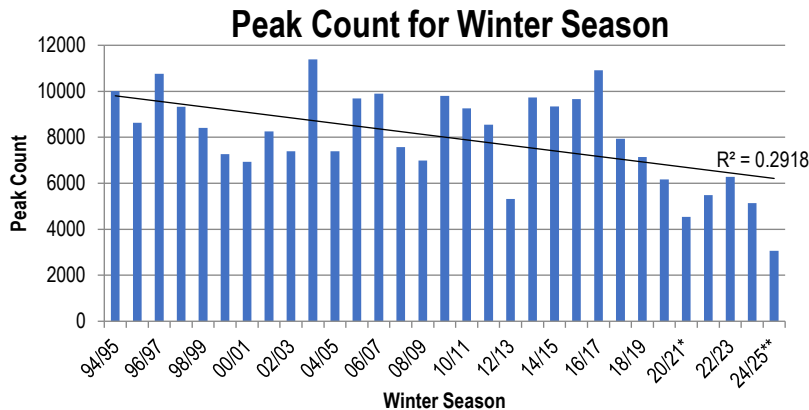
The data collected influences the management of the nature reserve and reservoir, as well as monitoring its condition for the SSSI designation. It also contributes to the WeBS scheme, which aims to identify population sizes, determine trends in numbers and distribution and identify important sites for non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. WeBS data is also collected for hundreds of other wetland sites across the UK. Pitsford Reservoir is recognised for regularly supporting nationally important numbers of Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard, Smew, and Great Crested Grebe. Threshold values used in this report are the most up to date available at the time of going to print unless otherwise stated.

Results

Common Bird Census (CBC) – overall the breeding season was relatively average. The total number of territories recorded was below the five year average, with 497, where the average is 512. But this does not take into account species that did breed on site such as Mute Swan and Buzzard, but were not picked up by the survey method. The total number of territories of the woodpeckers onwards is 462, where the 5 year average is 463. These birds are more reliably recorded on the CBC surveys, therefore give a more accurate representation of trends. The total number of breeding species (woodpecker onwards) is 29, where the 5 year average is 30.

General Ringing – due to a technical glitch, full ringing data is not available for 2025, therefore just the totals of birds ringed for each species will be stated in the species summaries.

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) – The winter of 2024/25 was the lowest recorded number of birds since on-site records started in 1994. A peak of only 3067 birds was recorded, excluding Gulls. The October data was missing and as this is often a peak month, the number may have been slightly higher, but not by much. This winter was particularly wet with large areas of flooding, therefore birds had more choice and may have gone elsewhere. There were noticeably less ‘drop-ins’ too, likely for the same reason. Also, wintering numbers in the UK for some species are declining due to milder winters and therefore reducing their need to travel further south to find suitable wintering grounds.



*The peak count of all birds on the reservoir, excluding Gulls. The winter 2024/25 has shown the lowest peak since on-site records started with only 3067 birds. *3 months missing data. ** October data missing.*

Casual Sightings – in contrast to recent years, the reservoir has seen a huge drawdown along all the margins through the summer and into the peak autumn migration period. This has seen more wader numbers than have been observed for many years, including some rare species for the county.

Species Summaries

The following species summaries consider all the relevant surveys and casual observations to summarise the status for each bird recorded on site this year. The ringing total is for all birds ringed; the territories are the number of breeding territories recorded during the CBC; the wintering number is the peak number for that species between August 2024 and March 2025 from the WeBS counts. The species are ordered as per The British List, 14/01/2013

(<http://www.bou.org.uk/british-list/>) and colour coded depending on their status according to the BTO UK Birds of Conservation Concern list (Publication 5 December 2021).

Red List – birds of high conservation concern

Amber List – birds of moderate conservation concern

Green List – birds of least conservation concern

Black List – Former breeding species

Blue – not on list

The status given with the name is for Pitsford Reservoir and does not represent their national status.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*: Present all year in varying numbers. The wintering population peaked in August 2024 with 143 birds, which is around average for the species on site. Plenty of birds were present through the breeding season but few nests were successful with only a couple of broods present.

Wintering: 143

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*: Occasional winter visitor.

A flock of eight were observed flying over the reservoir on the 5th October without stopping. A juvenile was present between the 22nd October and the 15th December.

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*: Very rare winter visitor.

One bird was seen on Christmas Eve with the goose flock in the Walgrave Bay.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*: Rare winter visitor. One bird was seen on Christmas Eve with the goose flock in the Walgrave Bay.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*: Occasional winter visitor. A small flock was seen from the 24th December until the end of the year.



White-fronted Geese taken at Pitsford © Robin Gossage

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: Resident with increasing breeding numbers. A peak of 242 wintering birds was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys, which is around average for the species on site. No territories were picked up on the CBC but breeding occurred.

Wintering: 242

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*: Present all year. A peak of 406 was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys, which is below average for the species on site. No territories were picked up on the CBC but breeding occurred.

Wintering: 406

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*: Occasional visitor/feral. A peak of four birds was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS count. Two birds were also observed on the 22nd March and another two on the 8th June and one on the 27th August in the Scaldwell Bay.

Wintering: 4

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*: Occasional visitor.

No birds were recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys, but a single bird was observed on the 7th February and six birds on the 22nd June.

Wigeon *Anas penelope*: Common winter visitor, occasional summer birds. The 2024/25 WeBS count recorded the fourth lowest for this species on site with a peak of 941 birds, where the long-term average for the site is 1520. The overall wintering population appears stable though. A pair were observed in the Scaldwell Bay on the 30th June but breeding is unlikely.

Wintering: 941

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: Present all year, but only low numbers in summer. The 2024/25 Webs count recorded the fourth lowest for this species on site with a peak of 144, where the long-term average for the site is 435. The overall wintering population appears stable though. At least one pair successfully bred this year.

Territories: 1

Wintering: 144

Teal *Anas crecca*: Common winter visitor, occasional summer birds, has bred once. Although the wintering population on site appears very stable, despite very large peaks and troughs (see Annual Report 2024), the winter of 2024/25 recorded an alarmingly low peak of only 30 birds. The previous lowest count for the site was 175 in 2020/21 (which was also missing 3 months of data!). Nationally the wintering population is doing very well, so time will tell if this was just a one-off bad year for this species at Pitsford, potentially due to flooding providing many more shallow feeding locations around the county.

Casual records from November 2025 saw numbers back up to 400, so hopefully the previous winter was an anomaly. A pair were observed on the 23rd March, but breeding is not confirmed.

Wintering: 30



Teal © Robin Gossage

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*: Resident.

The winter of 2024/25 recorded the second lowest peak count for the site with only 319 birds, where the long-term average is 724. A nest was confirmed in Christies' Copse and broods of ducklings were observed on the CBC.

Ringed: 12

Territories: 1

Wintering: 319

Pintail *Anas acuta*: Scarce winter visitor.

The winter of 2024/25 peaked at 19 birds, which is below average for the site. This species usually favours the nature reserve, but this winter, the majority of records were from the south half of the reservoir. A pair were recorded in the Scaldwell Bay on the 1st March, but breeding is unlikely. Birds started to

be recorded again from the 6th September with numbers reaching 12 by November.

Wintering: 19

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: Scarce passage migrant.

No birds were recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, but a drake was recorded in the Scaldwell Bay on the 22nd and 23rd May.



Garganey © Dave Jackson

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Winter and summer visitor in low numbers, occasionally breeds. The winter of 2024/25 recorded the lowest peak count for this species since on-site records started in 1994 with only 20 birds. The previous lowest count was 30 in the winter of 2020/21. A pair were recorded in the Hoclot Bay on the 21st March, but breeding is unconfirmed.

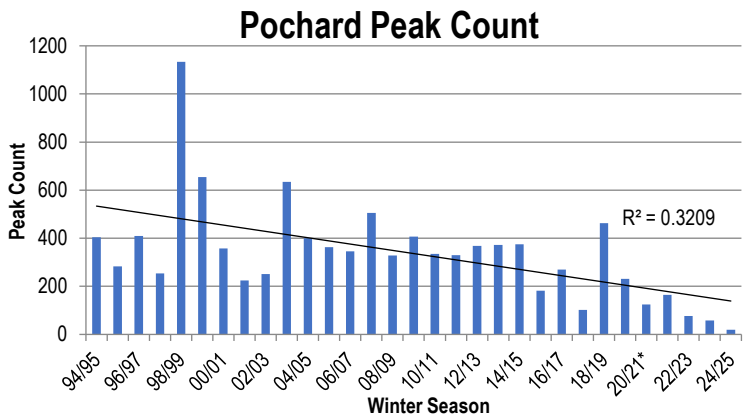
Wintering: 20

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*: Regular visitor in low numbers. A peak of only one bird was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts. This is low for the site in recent years. However,

returning birds were recorded from the 12th September with six birds observed.

Wintering: 1

Pochard *Aythya farina*: Present all year, small numbers in summer. This species is nationally declining and this is mirrored in the on-site trends. The winter of 2024/25 recorded the lowest peak count of only 20 birds.



*The peak counts of Pochard across the whole reservoir. *3 months data missing.*

Wintering: 20

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: Present all year, occasional breeder. The winter of 2024/25 recorded the fourth lowest peak count for the species on site with 903 birds recorded, where the long-term average is 1568. The overall, long-term trend on site appears to be stable. At least one pair successfully bred on site with four ducklings observed.

Territories: 1 Wintering: 903

Scaup *Aythya marila*: Occasional winter visitor.

No birds were recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, but a drake was briefly observed in the Walgrave Bay on the 30th January. Two returning birds were seen in the Scaldwell Bay on the 10th November.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*: Irregular passage migrant. One bird was observed on the 2nd July.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*: Common winter visitor. The winter of 2024/25 peaked at 71 birds, which is around average for the site.

Wintering: 71

Smew *Mergellus albellus*: Winter visitor in small numbers. One bird was recorded on the WeBS surveys in December 2024 and March 2025. It is unclear if it was the same bird.

Wintering: 1

Goosander *Mergus merganser*: Regular but decreasing winter visitor in small numbers. One female was observed on the 20th November and another bird on the 2nd December.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*: Following DEFRA cull now a very rare winter visitor.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*: Released from adjacent shoot and are not monitored on site.

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*: Released from adjacent shoot and are not monitored on site.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*: Rare winter visitor. A peak of one bird was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys. This was a juvenile bird that was first recorded on the 2nd January and regularly observed around the south half of the reservoir until the 2nd May.

Wintering: 1

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Present all year with a breeding colony. A peak of 93 wintering birds was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, which is slightly below average for the site. The breeding colony has stabilised at an average of 30 nests, so this year was close to average. They have spread around the marginal trees, making them harder to accurately count.

Territories: 25

Wintering: 93

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Low numbers throughout the year, possibly breeding. A peak of eight birds was recorded from the 2024/25 WeBS counts. This is low for recent years and birds were not recorded on each month of the survey season, which is unusual. Breeding is still not confirmed.

Wintering: 8

Great Egret *Ardea alba*: Regular winter visitor, potential breeder. The 2024/25 WeBS counts recorded a peak of seven birds. This is around average for recent years. They were recorded throughout the year, including the summer months, but breeding is not confirmed.

Wintering: 7

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Present all year with small breeding colony. A peak of 16 wintering birds was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, which is around average for this species on site. The breeding colony remains around average, but the nests have spread around all three bays of the nature reserve and so are harder to spot, therefore this is a minimum number.

Territories: 10

Wintering: 16

★ **Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*:** very rare visitor.

A Purple Heron was new to the site this year, seen fishing on the south side of the reservoir before flying north towards the nature reserve on the 29th April.

Glossy ibis *Plegadis*

falcinellus: Very rare visitor.

One bird was regularly observed in the drawdown of the Scaldwell Bay between the 6th and 23rd September.



Above: Glossy Ibis © Kev Rowley

Left: Spoonbill © Dave Jackson

Two of the many birding highlights attracted by the drawdown conditions.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: Very rare visitor.

One bird was taking advantage of the drawdown between the 15th and 17th October.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: Present all year, small breeding population. The winter of 2024/25 recorded a peak of 51 birds, which is the lowest count for the wintering population on site since the winter of 2004/05 and considerably lower than the peaks of recent years. Breeding was confirmed this year, although not picked up on the CBC.

Wintering: 51

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: Present all year.

This is the only species to have reached nationally significant numbers on site this winter, with a peak of 175 birds, where the threshold is 170. It is below the site average of 233. Not picked up on the CBC surveys due to surveying methods not being suitable, but they did breed this year.

Wintering: 175

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*: Occasional visitor, usually in winter. One bird arrived on the 21st November and stayed all through the year, feeding in the deep water on the south half of the reservoir.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*: Common visitor after reintroduction in Northants. Good numbers observed and breeding very likely although no nests were found on site.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*: Scarce passage migrant. One bird was recorded on the 25th July with occasional sightings through August and September.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: Present all year. Regularly seen around site and breeding is likely although no nests were found.

Ringed: 1

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*: Rare visitor. Bird G625 was photographed on the north-east side of the reservoir. The tracking information indicated that it roosted between Nasby and Clipston on its journey from Scotland to Sussex.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: Present all year with confirmed breeding. Likely to have bred in each bay although no nests confirmed.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: Regular visitor. Regularly observed around the reservoir with some wonderful views of fishing birds. Recently bred nearby.

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: Resident. Subjective observations seem that the bird is less abundant around site, but do not have data to back this up.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: Summer and passage migrant.
First observed on the 28th and 29th May, with two individuals noted, then regularly seen through to September.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*: Occasional winter visitor.



A couple of sightings made in January and February, then regular sightings from the 9th July through to the end of the year.

Peregrine © Robin Gossage

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*: Scarce winter visitor.

One bird was recorded in the December of the 2024/25 WeBS counts, with another casual record on the 14th February 2025.

Wintering: 1

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: Resident.

The winter 2024/25 recorded the fourth lowest peak count for this species with 106 birds, where the long-term average for the site is 183. The overall wintering population on site appears stable. One nest was confirmed in The Meadows on the CBC surveys, but more are likely.

Ringed: 9

Territories: 1

Wintering: 106

Coot *Fulica atra*: Large numbers all year.

A peak of 1067 birds was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, where the long-term average for the site is 1988. Six nests were recorded on the CBC surveys, but more are likely.

Territories: 6

Wintering: 1067

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*: Annual visitor, recently breeding. Up to two birds were recorded from mid February into April with occasional sightings through to August. Breeding did not occur on site for the second consecutive year. This is most likely due to the dense vegetation and Black-headed Gull dominance on the Scaldwell rafts.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*: Very rare visitor. A juvenile was observed in the Scaldwell Bay between the 2nd and 6th October.

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*: Common winter visitor to surrounding agricultural land, occasionally seen on reserve. No birds were recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys, but a single bird was observed on the 15th February. Returning birds were observed throughout October and November with flocks of up to 90 individuals benefitting from the drawdown.

Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*: Scarce passage migrant. One bird was recorded in front of the Birdclub Hide on the 16th October.

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*: Common passage migrant and winter visitor. The wintering population is still showing a declining trend, with a peak of only 211 birds on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys.

Wintering: 211

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*: Scarce passage migrant. One bird was observed flying north over the causeway on the 25th March.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*: Scarce passage migrant. One bird was heard in the Scaldwell Bay on the 18th June and regularly recorded until early September.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*: Annual passage migrant. A couple of brief sightings were made in March with another bird recorded on the nature reserve on the 28th June. One bird was also recorded on the 7th August.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*: Annual passage migrant. Single birds were recorded on the 20th and 22nd March.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: Annual passage migrant. One bird was observed flying north over the causeway on the 28th June. They were then regularly seen taking advantage of the drawdown until the 9th October, with a peak of 25 birds on the 1st July.



Black-tailed Godwit © Robin Gossage

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*: Occasional passage migrant. One bird was recorded on the dam and sailing club, south of the causeway on the 23th May.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax*: Occasional passage migrant. Regular sightings of up to five birds using the drawdown between the 16th August to the 8th November.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*: Regular passage migrant. Regular sightings of up to three birds were made on the drawdown between the 7th August and 26th October.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*: Rare passage migrant.

One bird was seen on the 30th August and a juvenile bird stayed between the 22nd and 28th September.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Passage migrant, occasionally winters. A peak of three birds were recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, which is around average for the species on site and Nationally Significant. Casual sightings were made throughout the year but breeding is not likely.

Wintering: 3

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: Passage migrant, occasionally winters. A peak of one bird was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, which is below the average for the site. Later in the year, the drawdown attracted record numbers for the site with up to eight birds regularly seen from June through to the end of the year.

Wintering: 1

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Scarce visitor.

No birds were recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, but birds were regularly recorded from late April through to November, with a record peak of eleven birds on the 19th August.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: Rare passage migrant.

Two birds were recorded on the 17th August in the Scaldwell Bay with regular sightings of single birds to the end of August.

Redshank *Tringa tetanus*: Passage migrant and winter visitor. One bird was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS count, which is below average for the site, but casual sightings of up to two birds were made between February and September.

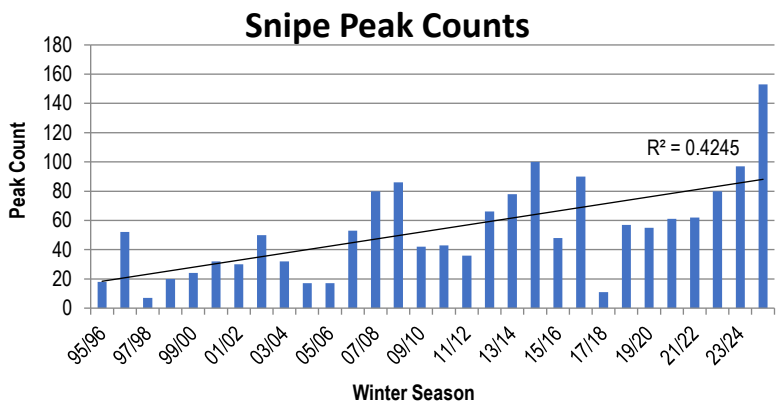
Wintering: 1

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyrtus minimus*: Rare winter visitor.
A peak of two birds was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, which is average for recent years. Another two birds were observed on the 15th December.

Wintering: 2

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*: Winter visitor.
Occasional birds were recorded from the Walgrave Bay and Christies' Copse at the start of the year and again in the Walgrave Bay in November.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: Winter visitor and passage migrant. The wintering population on site is showing a steadily increasing trend. The winter of 2024/25 peaked at 153 birds – the highest recorded on site for this species. All were recorded from The Meadows – a stronghold for this species on site.



Snipe numbers peaked at a record 153 in the winter of 2024/25. The wintering population is steadily increasing on site.

Ringed: 2 Wintering: 153

Black Tern *Childonias niger*: Scarce passage migrant.
One bird was seen north of the causeway between the 27th August and the 4th September.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*: Summer breeding and passage migrant. Six birds were recorded in the gull roost on the August and September of the 2024/25 WeBS counts. Returning birds were recorded from the 26th April with only six pairs recorded from the rafts. They appear to be recovering very slowly from the bird flu in 2023 and a total of 14 pulli were ringed from the rafts, which is the same as last year.

Ringed: 14

Territories: 6

Wintering: 6

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*: Present all year, increasing in winter. A peak of 3000 wintering birds were recorded from the gull roost on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys. This is relatively good for recent years, but considerably lower than the numbers seen here ten years ago. Breeding numbers have recovered well from the 2023 bird flu outbreak



Black-headed Gulls © David Arden

with approximately 20 nests on the rafts. This is an estimate because the poor condition of the rafts meant that surveyors could not get close enough to accurately count and ring the birds. As a result of not being able to approach the rafts, fewer pulli were ringed than last year.

Ringed: 30

Territories: 20

Wintering: 3000

Little Gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*: Occasional passage migrant. Sightings were made of up to three birds throughout early April and a juvenile on 29th July. Also one bird was seen on the 15th December.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*: Occasional visitor all year. No birds were recorded from the gull roost

counts in the winter of 2024/25, but two birds were observed off the dam on the 11th March and on the 23rd and 28th December.

Common Gull *Larus canus*: Common winter visitor and passage migrant. A peak of 1000 birds was recorded from the gull roost on the 2024/25 WeBS counts – this is very good for recent years as the species and roost are showing signs of decline on site.

Wintering: 1000

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*: Common passage migrant, with occasional pairs possibly intent on breeding. Numbers of this species in the gull roost do fluctuate, but this year peaked at only 60 birds, which is low but in line with recent years.

Wintering: 60

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*: Fairly common, mainly winter visitor. The gull roost peaked in the winter of 2024/25 with 150 birds. This is very good for this species on site, especially in recent years as it rarely gets into triple figures.

Wintering: 150

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michahellis*: Regular visitor.

A peak of five birds was recorded from the gull roost on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys, but sightings were made of this species in the roost throughout the rest of the year also.

Wintering: 5

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*: Occasional winter visitor.

A juvenile hybrid bird was observed on the 20th August and an adult on the 30th, both on the dam. Regular sightings were also made throughout October and early November.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*: Rare winter visitor.

A fourth calendar year bird was observed off the dam on the 30th March and a second calendar year bird was seen on the 24th May.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*: Winter visitor and passage migrant. A peak of four birds was recorded from the gull roost on the 2024/25 WeBS surveys, which is around average for this species on site in recent years.

Wintering: 4

Stock Dove *Columba oenas*: Present all year in low numbers. Four territories were established from the CBC surveys, which is around average for the site.

Ringed: 2

Territories: 4

Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*: A very common bird which breeds throughout the year. It is consciously omitted from the CBC surveys because of its abundance and difficulty in mapping territories.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: Present all year in surrounding area. One territory was established on the CBC surveys in the Walgrave Bay.

Territories: 1

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: Occasional summer visitor, declining. Heard occasionally between the 29th April and 9th July.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*: Present all year in surrounding area. This was a good year for sightings of this species on site, but reportedly a poor year for the species nationally. We had several sightings of birds hunting in The Meadows and roosting in the Goosander Hide. Just as a barn owl box was installed on the edge of The Meadows and the bird looked interested in using it, Barn Owl feathers were found nearby, likely from this bird.



Little Owl *Athene noctua* : Present all year in surrounding area.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*: Present all year.

A poor year for this species on site with no successful nests recorded and no birds ringed.

Swift *Apus apus*: Common summer visitor.

First record was of more than 100 birds on the 6th June although they are likely to have arrived before then.

Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: Present for much of the year.

A peak of three birds was recorded on the 2024/25 WeBS counts, which is around average for this species on site. Birds are regularly seen, especially in the Holcot and Walgrave Bays where nests are likely just off the reserve. Birds have also been observed over the new ponds in Christies' Copse.

Wintering: 3

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*: Resident.

No territories were established on the CBC surveys and very few registrations were noted, which is unusual for the site.

Ringed: 1

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*: Resident.

Six territories were established on the CBC surveys, which is slightly above average for the site.

Ringed: 5 Territories: 6

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor*: Scarce resident, declining. One bird was seen on the old road near the feeding station on the 19th January and one was heard drumming on the 12th March.

Magpie *Pica pica*: Present all year.

No territories were established on the CBC surveys, but at least three nests were likely.

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: Present all year with some winter visitors. One territory was established on the CBC surveys near

The Point, but more are likely. One bird was ringed in Christies' Copse on the 4th January.

Ringed: 1

Territories: 1

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*: Present all year with large roosting numbers. One nest was observed in a regularly used hole in a tree on the boundary to the reserve.

Ringed: 49

Territories: 1

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*: Present all year with large roosting numbers. The rookery recorded 53 nests this year, which is around average for recent years. The rookery on the A508 near the old road is increasing.



Rook © Neil McMahon

They have taken a liking to our bird feeding station and our

bird ringers saw this as an opportunity to find out more about this species. They have ringed 61 birds this year, whereas between 1994 and 2025, only a handful had been ringed on site! Normally, this species and corvids in general are smart enough to avoid bird ringers' nets, but 'our' rooks are actively seeking out the ringers' traps. Some individuals have been re-trapped multiple times, indicating that they will tolerate briefly being handled for an easy feed. In a few years, this will give us some really interesting information about this species and their behaviours.

Ringed: 61

Territories: 53

Carrión Crow *Corvus corone*: Present all year, often in established pairs. Unusually, no territories were established on the CBC surveys, but breeding is likely.

Ringed: 1

Raven *Corvus corax*: Resident.

Regularly seen and heard around the reserve, with a nest confirmed again in the Walgrave Bay.

Territories: 1

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: Present all year with autumn influxes. Numbers of breeding territories are still doing well on site with 24 recorded, which is the highest for this species.

Ringed: 21

Territories: 24

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*: Present all year.

Fifty-one territories were recorded from the CBC surveys, which is one of the highest counts for this species on site.

Ringed: 315

Territories: 51

Great Tit *Parus major*: Present all year.

Twenty-five territories were established on the CBC surveys, which is around average for this species on site.

Ringed: 141

Territories: 25

Coal Tit *Periparus ater*: Present all year.

Breeding territories for this species on site dropped again from a record low last year to only two territories this year. The new survey method, may mean that some are missed and it may have been closer to last year's number, but still not close to average.

Territories: 2

Willow Tit *Poecile montana*: Scarce resident, declining.

No records this year.

Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris*: Scarce resident.

For the first time since 2023 no confirmed nests or territories were recorded for this species on site. Single registrations were made from the usual preferred nesting areas on the reserves but could not be equated to territories.

Ringed: 1

Skylark *Alauda arvensis*: Resident and passage migrant.
Heard in the surrounding land all around the reserve throughout the year.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. First recorded on site on the 21st March. 17 nests were taken up in the Sand Martin Bank in The Meadows and 71 birds were ringed. This was a mix of adult birds and pulli and three of the adult birds were nestlings from the Rutland banks.

Ringed: 71 Territories: 17

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. First recorded on site on the 3rd April. A family were recorded in the Holcot Bay, but breeding is unlikely on site.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*: Summer visitor and passage migrant regularly seen feeding over the reservoir.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*: Recent breeding species.
No records this year.

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*: Present all year.
The highest number of territories recorded since 2011 when numbers declined to a lower average.

Ringed: 18 Territories: 13

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. This species is still showing a steadily increasing trend, recording the second highest territory count for this species on site.

Ringed: 36 Territories: 39

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*: Summer visitor and passage migrant, declining. This species is still clinging on with one territory recorded, unusually in the Walgrave Bay in front of Block 1. They have not been recorded from this area before. Although not a territory, two birds were recorded signing at the same time in Christies' Copse and another registration was

made from Block 8 – another area where they are not usually found. At this stage in a declining species, it might be that males are trying out new locations in a desperate search for a mate and although one territory was established, it unfortunately does not indicate successful breeding.

Ringed: 5 Territories: 1

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. The breeding population on site is doing well and has picked up this year after a drop in territories over the last couple of years.

Ringed: 13 Territories: 45

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. The breeding population on site appears stable and this year saw the number of territories slightly above average.

Ringed: 6 Territories: 30

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. No territories were established on the CBC surveys, but one singing registration was made from the Walgrave Bay.

Ringed: 2

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. One territory was established in the Scaldwell Bay and there may have been one just off the reserve or in the boundary hedge in The Meadows.

Ringed: 9 Territories: 1

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*: Scarce passage migrant, formally breeding. One bird was ringed on site, which is only the tenth bird to have been ringed here since 1998.

Ringed: 1

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*: Declining summer visitor and regular passage migrant. One territory was

established in The Meadows. No territories have been recorded on site since 2021.

Ringed: 35

Territories: 1

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. Six territories were established this year, which is good for recent years. The usual two territories were in the patch of *Phragmites* by the Fishing Lodge and unusually, there was two in the area in front of Lagoon Hide as well as two on The Point.

Ringed: 23

Territories: 6

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*: Resident.

Unfortunately, no territories were established on the CBC surveys this year but it is likely that they bred on site in each of the bays.

Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*: Present all year.

The overall breeding population on site appears stable, but has dropped to below average after a record peak in 2019.

Ringed: 2

Territories: 5

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*: Present all year.

The breeding population on site appears very stable with an average number of territories this year.

Ringed: 14

Territories: 66

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*: Present all year in low numbers.

Small murmurations were observed in the autumn.

Ringed: 6

Blackbird *Turdus merula*: Present all year.

The breeding population appears stable but the number of territories was slightly below average. They may have suffered due to the drought making the ground difficult to feed from.

Ringed: 8

Territories: 27

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*: Common winter visitor.

Large flocks present through the autumn and winter with a bountiful berry crop this year.

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*: Present all year.

Slightly down from last year's high territory count but this year was still above average for the site.

Ringed: 3

Territories: 12

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*: Common winter visitor.

Large flocks present through the autumn and winter with a bountiful berry crop this year.

Ringed: 12

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*: Present all year in low numbers. As usual, no territories were established but a couple of singing registrations were made in the Holcot Bay.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: Scarce summer visitor and passage migrant. Unfortunately, breeding was not confirmed this year, but one bird was recorded on the 13th May near the Fishing Lodge, but not recorded again until August.

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*: Present all year.

The breeding population appears to be very stable on site with an average number of territories established this year.

Ringed: 22

Territories: 50

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*: Rare passage migrant.

One bird was observed with a Tit/ Warbler flock near the Walgrave Hide on the 11th August.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*: Scarce passage migrant. Occasional sightings were made between July and September.

Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola*: Scarce winter visitor.

A pair were observed south of the causeway in January and February and returning birds were recorded, mostly from the Scaldwell Bay from 7th October throughout the rest of the year.

Ringed: 5

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*: Scarce passage migrant.

Occasional sightings were made in the Scaldwell Bay around the end of August and early September.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*: Present all year.

The breeding population on site is declining in line with national trends, but has shown a slight upturn in recent years.

Ringed: 9

Territories: 10

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Resident in immediate neighbourhood with occasional birds on the reserve.

Ringed: 4

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Declining.

Up to two birds were seen at the very start of the year into early February at the feeding station. After this, the only local sightings were of small numbers just off the reserve near the Walgrave Bay.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: Summer visitor and passage migrant. Up to eight birds were recorded on the dam on the 16th April and a steady flow of passage birds was noted over the Scaldwell Bay through September.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: Scarce resident and passage migrant. Regularly recorded throughout the year.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: Present all year.

No breeding was confirmed this year but is possible.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*: Scarce passage migrant. Up to two birds were occasionally seen between August and September with one bird ringed.

Ringed: 1



Tree Pipit © Neil McMahon

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*:

Common passage migrant, occasional breeder on adjacent land. Eighteen birds were ringed during the autumn, which is around average for the site.

Ringed: 18

Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*: Scarce passage migrant.

One bird was recorded south of the causeway on the 20th October.

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*: Present all year in large numbers. The breeding population is still showing a steeply declining trend on site and nationally. This year only 13 territories were recorded which is the lowest for the site, but it has not dropped any further.

Ringed: 10

Territories: 13

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*: Occasional variable winter visitor. One bird was recorded on the 21st March, then with regular sightings from the 19th October onwards, particularly around Christies' Copse, likely attracted by the adjacent sunflower field.

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*: Present all year in low numbers. No territories were established this year on the CBC surveys, which is in line with the declining breeding population on site and nationally.

Ringed: 22

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*: Present all year in low numbers. The breeding population still appears to be doing well on site with four territories established this year.

Ringed: 25 Territories: 4

Siskin *Carduelis spinus*: Winter and spring visitor.

Up to twenty birds were recorded early in the year with regular sightings until March and seen again in good numbers from July onwards.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*: Present for much of the year in low numbers. No territories were established on the CBC surveys this year.

Lesser (common) Redpoll *Carduelis cabaret*: Common winter visitor. Regular sightings were made from August through the rest of the year.

Ringed: 2

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*: Irruptive and nomadic summer visitor. A good year for this species on site. One bird was heard calling in the Walgrave Bay on the 2nd June and 15 birds were observed flying south-east on the 11th June, with regular sightings made through the rest of the year.

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: Present all year with a stable population. One territory was established on the CBC surveys, which is good for recent years and there were more singing registrations than normal. Two birds were ringed at Christies' Copse.

Ringed: 2 Territories: 1

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*: Present all year, increasing in winter. One territory was established on the CBC surveys in the hedges around The Meadows.

Ringed: 4 Territories: 1

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*: Irruptive and nomadic but present all year. Nine territories were established on the CBC surveys, which is very good for recent years and it is possible there may have been a couple more that did not quite meet the survey criteria to make them a territory. They also appeared more spread out around the reserve rather than just being in The Meadows.

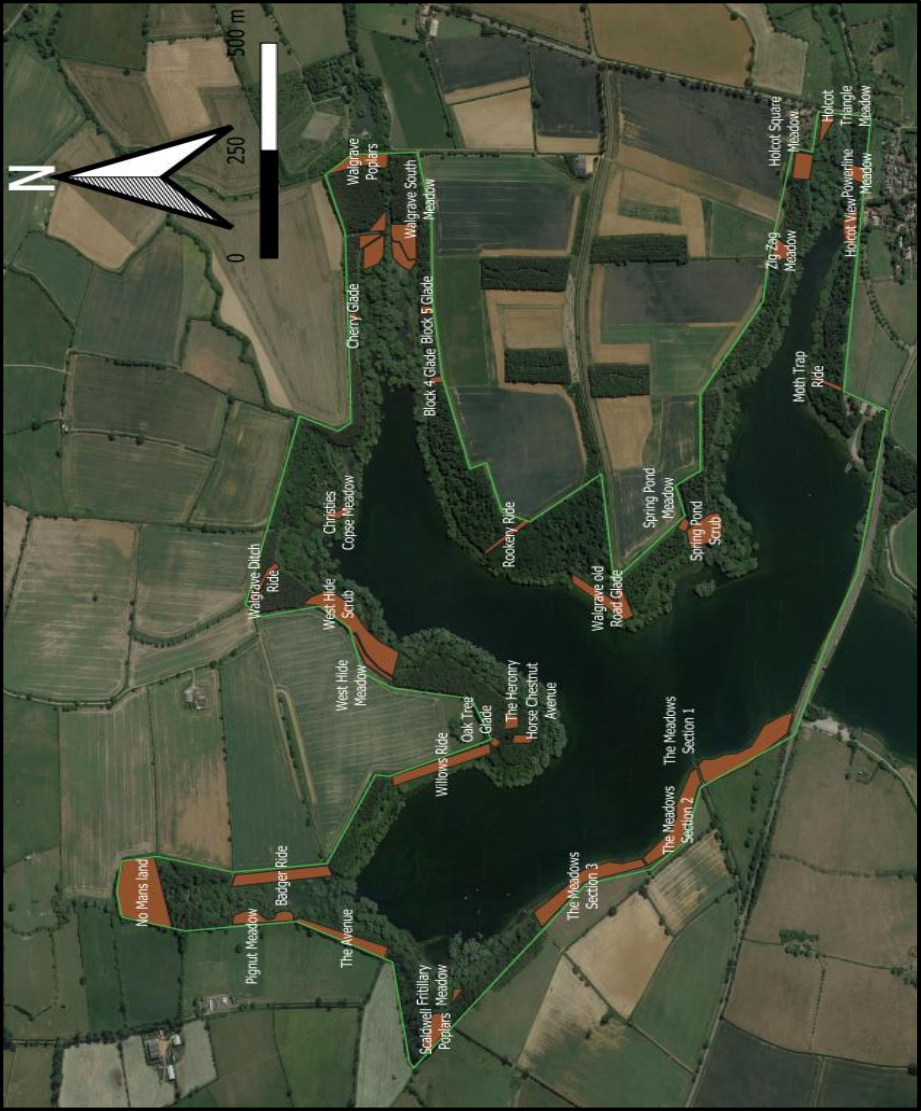
Ringed: 19

Territories: 9



Reed Bunting © Dave Jackson

Map of Pitsford Water Nature Reserve



Map of Pitsford Reservoir



Map of woodland compartments

