

Alkborough Flats Monthly Wildlife Report August 2014

August was a month of contrasts with high spring tides flooding the whole on the inundation area and some of the adjacent fields while some torrential downpours also added to the areas of floodwater but during periods of neap tides the site became very dry with the inundation area looking rather like a parched desert on some hot sunny days.

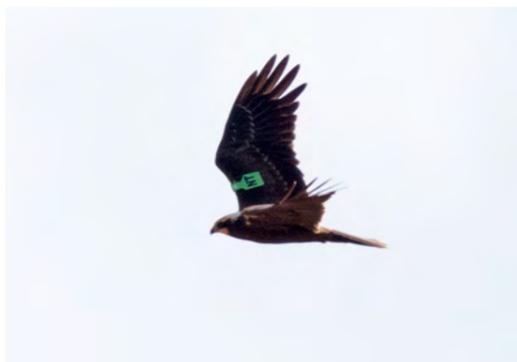
The local naturalised geese populations took to frequenting the Flats on several days in August peaking with 1350 **Greylag Geese** and 40 **Canadas** on the 12th and 440 **Barnacles** on the 17th. **Shelduck** numbers remained low with the majority being fledged juveniles contributing 80% of the total of 106 birds on the 11th that proved to be the highest total of the month. Two **Wigeon** returned on the 11th but there were never more than four thereafter in contrast to **Teal** which increased from 60 on the 1st to 326 by the 9th then 470 on the 11th and jumped to 880 on the 28th. After the record count of **Gadwall** in June there was a real dearth of birds in July but August saw a small resurgence in numbers with a maximum of 56 being logged on the 17th. There were also up to 160 **Mallard**, a single **Pintail** on the 16th, three **Garganey** on the 9th and a notable peak of 94 **Shoveler** from the 10th to the 17th. Broods of **Little Grebes** continued to fledge on the new reedbed and the five **Mute Swan** cygnets all survived to the month end. The white heron contingent continued to thrive on the site with a new record roost count of 48 **Little Egrets** on the 6th and up to 36 feeding



on site over the ensuing days before here was an obvious exodus in the third week. These numbers were all the more significant given that the previous highest total on the Flats was of 25 in August 2012. The flock of **Spoonbills** rose to 12 from the 1st to the 9th but then fell to seven from 11th to the 12th after which there seemed to be a different number of birds every day with lows of one and highs of five to the month end. The colour ringed bird remained on site through to the 12th. Then to complete a white heron month a **Great White Egret** put in two appearances on the 30th forming the fourth record for the site of this increasing species.

On the 9th a juvenile **Marsh Harrier** was seen with green wing tags and the inscription NT in black letters; this allowed the bird to be traced back to a ringing study in Norfolk and I am grateful to Phil Littler for the information below;

There are now 3 of us ringing and tagging these birds in Norfolk and Suffolk, and to date have tagged 166 birds. Recoveries have come from as far north as Aberdeen, south to Devon and west to Pembroke. Overseas recoveries have come from Spain and from Portugal, Belgium and Germany - the last three being the first live ones to those countries. A bird was also spotted in Senegal, but the tag couldn't be read for definite. The bird you saw was ringed and tagged on the RSPB reserve at Buckenham on June 11th 2014, and was one of five. It was sexed as a female, with its' siblings being two male and two female.



This bird stayed in the area through to at least the 17th but it proved to be one of less than ten **Marsh Harriers** in the area at this time as the vast majority of the local birds departed from the Humber leaving just a few moulting

females and odd males and juveniles. During the spring an early summer a male and female **Montagu's Harrier** were seen on the site on several dates and visits became more numerous in July and early August as both birds



hunted the site while a fledged juvenile was also noted on a couple of dates following successful breeding on the Humber in 2014. Up to seven **Common Buzzards** were floating around the area usually being seen over the escarpment and there were one or two **Hobbies** on



several dates with the odd juvenile **Peregrine** terrorising the waders and wildfowl while the first **Merlin** of the autumn, an adult female, was seen on the 1st and another bird was picked up on the 24th.

It was a moderate month for wader passage but as has become the norm in recent years the number of small waders was relatively low and birds rather infrequent in occurrence while the larger waders were far more numerous and stayed for longer periods. The flock of 1000 **Avocets** on the 1st included 100 fledged juveniles a good percentage and the flock increased further to 1200 on the 9th; this exceeded the previous site record of 980 in September 2012 by 23% demonstrating again the importance of the Flats for post breeding Avocets. **Black-tailed Godwits** were also omnipresent with 100 – 200 birds on most dates but a notable 570 was recorded on the 6th and a maximum of 840 on the 9th including 11 fledged juveniles in what was a poor breeding season for this species in Iceland; a single flock of 17 juveniles was later noted on the 23rd. up to 275 **Curlew** were on site but the **Spotted Redshanks** seemed rather erratic in their flights over from Blacktoft with a peak of just eight on the 22nd still outnumbering the highest count of **Greenshank** that could only muster five birds. Up to five **Little Ringed Plovers** were present in the last 10 days of the month with a peak of 33 **Ringed Plovers** on the 23rd. A summer plumaged **Grey Plover** on the 9th was a nice looking bird; the **Lapwing** flock rose to 650 birds and remained fairly static with the only **Golden Plovers** being a small flock of 15 birds. It was a generally poor month for Dunlin but 43 were logged on the 28th along with a single **Knot** and the first four juvenile **Little Stints** and three juvenile **Curlew Sandpipers** forming a notable arrival of eastern waders. August proved to be a good month for **Ruff** with



totals climbing from 14 on the 9th to a maximum of 59 on the 28th including 18 juveniles. **Green Sandpipers** were around all month but the actual number of birds was often difficult to ascertain as they frequented the smaller pools and areas surrounded by reeds where they were usually invisible; up to eight birds were seen though. In a good year for **Wood Sandpiper** records two birds were present on the 16th while five **Common Sandpipers** on the 1st proved to be one of only a few records with the last seen on the 28th. The 12th **Pectoral Sandpiper** for the Flats was an adult or first-summer found on the evening of the 26th right in front of the hide; the following day it



typically proved more elusive feeding in amongst the sea aster with a flock of **Ruff** and this habit continued through to the 28th when it flew off east with the **Ruff** and was not seen again. Winding up the wader report the first autumn **Temminck's Stint** put in very brief appearances on the 16th and 27th; there have been ten spring birds. Three first-summer **Little Gulls** remained on site moulting into second winter plumage and there were



further records of **Mediterranean Gulls** on the 9th and 10th the latter a colour ringed adult while five **Yellow-legged Gulls** on the 6th was a site record and 242 **Great Black-backed Gulls** on the 1st another notable count. Pride of place on the passerine front was a fine juvenile **Cuckoo** found on the morning of the 17th and present for



two days. At least two **Kingfishers** were feeding around the ditches with a juvenile **Green Woodpecker** noted on the 23rd, 400 **Sand Martins** on the 16th, **Tree Pipits** on the 23rd and 25th, up to 100 **Yellow Wagtails** and 100 **Pied Wagtails** on the 6th, two **Whinchats** on the 17th and three on the 28th with single **Wheatears** on the 8th and 20th and a **Spotted Flycatcher** on the 20th completed a good birding month.

Graham Catley

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