

## The Wildlife of Lofts Farm, Heybridge, Essex

This Report covers the period from around 1993/94 to the end of 2021. The majority of records have been collected over the last decade during which time a small number of local birdwatchers have visited, albeit not always regularly and with a bias towards the spring and winter periods. In 2019 Malcolm Corbett and Graham Barber received formal permission to visit all areas of the site for more thorough bird surveys and it should thus be borne in mind when reading this report that all of the records up to that time were limited to what could be seen from the public footpaths. In the early years viewing of Carp Lake was relatively easy as the water side vegetation had not become established and good views were possible over the Lake from the public footpath, and also from the vehicular gate on Scraley Road. However, with the growth of trees and scrub (predominantly willow), the last few years have seen it become extremely difficult to view any of Carp Lake from this path. Angler's took steps some years ago to stop viewing from the gate and, in any event, vegetation has grown up in that area too.

The wildlife present is no doubt impacted by the level and nature of the angling activities around the lakes. In the early years disturbance to both lakes was minimal. Carp Lake especially has, over the last decade, been at times quite heavily disturbed and this is not helped when anglers camp out overnight so that there has been, at times, a 24 hour presence. We have also seen shooting over Carp Lake during the period when the anglers were most active. All in all this disturbance has had a detrimental affect on wildlife's use of Carp Lake and to a lesser degree Trout Lake. Shooting still continues over the latter lake. While we appreciate that this is in an attempt to control the numbers of feral geese this does also affect the use of the site by other wildlife.

What follows is a summary of the historic records of various wildlife groups on the site. We appreciate that some additional recording during the autumn of 2021, of invertebrates and flora, has taken place but at this point, the records have not been included.

The bird section has been compiled using data from Essex Birdwatching Society's database. The systematic list, names and order are based on the last BOURC British List 9th Edition 2017 (with amendments dated August 2021). More familiar English names are included in brackets. With the recent publication of the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (BOCC5), the opportunity has been taken to identify those species on the Red List (**R**), and of most conservation concern, and those on the Amber List (**A**), the next level of concern.

### BIRDS

#### Dark-bellied Brant (Brent) Goose *Branta bernicla* **A**

*One record.*

2010	28th December	Five	Just north of Trout Lake
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#### Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

*Common, naturalised, resident.*

Several pairs breed on the Lakes in most years, although four broods in 2010 is the highest number reported.

Numbers recorded outside the breeding season have remained surprisingly consistent over the last couple of decades with the largest count being 136 on 12th September 2004 with more recent counts of around 100 on several occasions.

#### Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* **A**

*Scarce visitor, less regular in recent years. Origin uncertain.*

The species has been recorded in nine years - 1995, 1998-2003, 2008 and 2011. All the records up to 2002 were of single birds but five were reported on 26th May 2002 (a very late date for these to be wild birds), with 1-3 recorded up to June 2003. A single bird was noted on and off in 2008 (and had a metal ring on one leg) with the last record being of three birds in December 2011.

### Greylag Goose *Anser anser* A

Common, naturalised, resident.

Counts of 100+ were noted during the early 1990s with by the very late 1990s around 200 reported. Peak numbers subsequently have been in the region of 200-250, with the highest count being 375 on 26th August 2012.

In parallel with the levelling in overall numbers, breeding pairs have now levelled off at around 5-7 pairs, although ten pairs with 80 young were noted on 13th May 2003.

### Tundra Bean Goose *Anser serrirostris* A

Two records, perhaps of the same bird.

2008	12th January	One	
2008	12th-29th April	One	

It is quite possible that that the records refer to a feral bird, although Bean Geese are unusual in collections so this bird could well be a wild individual.

### White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* R

Two records of 22 birds

1996	26th January	Seven	
2021	31st January-21st March	Two on and off, with 15 on 6th March	Lake Field

All records have been of the Russian race *albifrons*.

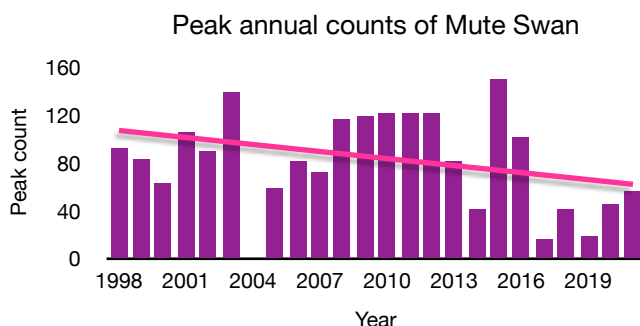
### Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Around two-three pairs breed in most years, although four pairs bred in 1999.

Outside the breeding season, numbers tend to peak in late winter/early spring and again in the autumn, although occasional large gatherings occur in winter. Prior to 2017, counts were larger than they are now. Counts of 100+ were noted in nine years from 2001 with the highest being: 150 on 12th December 2015 (with 135 in November); 138 on 5th March 2003; 120 on 19th April 2010, 23rd December 2011 and 15th October 2012. Most of these birds occurred on Trout Lake and Lake Field beyond.

Since 2017 there has been a significant decline in numbers with disturbance thought to be a factor.



### Tundra Swan (Bewick's Swan) *Cygnus columbianus* R

Four records involving 24 birds.

1999	19th October	Four	
2002	31st December	Eight	Flew west over Lake Field

2010	27th December	Four	Two adults
2011	1st January for at least a week.	Eight	Six adults, two immatures

### Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* A

Two records.

2003	18th February-27th March	One	
2008	1st March-5th April	One adult but with two on 24th March	

It was thought that the 2008 long-staying individual may not have been of wild origin.

### Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Common, naturalised, resident.

The first site record involved three birds on 22nd April 1997, since when numbers have very steadily increased, although it is only in the last decade that double figure counts were reached (the first being 12 on 8th December 2012). The highest count to date has been 32 on 10th January 2017.

Despite the increase in birds, breeding has been noted on just two occasions, in 2011 and 2018.

### Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* A

Late winter/spring visitor; has bred.

Breeding was noted in 1994, when a pair with five young was seen. Otherwise, the odd pair has been noted in other years but breeding not proven.

Numbers peak noticeably in March/April, when local birds are looking for prospective nest sites, with a peak of 30 on 15th March 2019.

All records have fallen in the period January to June

### Mandarin Aix *galericulata*

One record.

2011	6th November	One	Male
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### Garganey *Spatula querquedula* A

Seven records involving at least eight birds.

1993	15th August	One	Female
2000	21st April	One	Male
2004	13th April	One	Male
2007	21st-22nd April and 5th-7th May and 2nd June	Two in April then one in May and June	Pair in April and male in May and June
2008	12th May	One	Male
2010	22nd August	One	Female/juvenile
2019	24th April	One	Male

### Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* A

Passage migrant and winter visitor. Has summered.

Two pairs summered in 2000 whilst a male summered in 2001, and single birds/pairs have occasionally been recorded into June.

An increase in numbers in some years in July/August with some double-figure counts noted, e.g., 60 on 19th August 2002, suggests movement through Lofts. The largest counts, however, tend to be during mid-winter when peaks have been 130 on 30th December 1995 and 120 on 10th January 1996, although these are exceptional counts, 10-20 being more typical currently. Numbers in the spring are generally low, but there was an unusually high count of 140 on 20th March 2010.

### **Gadwall *Mareca strepera* A**

*Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Although increasing across the County, the species has never been confirmed to have bred at Lofts (although it does on Chigborough Lakes), but can be found in all months on both Lakes. Counts at Lofts peaked in the mid-2000s but have subsequently declined. The reason for this is unclear but perhaps changes in the lake side vegetation and increased disturbance from anglers have caused the reduction. After high double-figure counts during the 1990s and early 2000s, the first three figure count came in 2003, with 120+ present on 12th March. The peak count of 250 was noted on 25th February 2002 with small three-figure counts continuing to be noted until the last in 2011, when 120 were present on 23rd December. Subsequently, numbers have dropped away noticeably with double-figure counts not common.

### **Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* A**

*Passage migrant.*

Males have almost certainly summered in four years (2000, 2001, 2006 and 2010) but in line with a decline in numbers generally none have done so recently. Numbers are never large with the greatest being 80 on 10th September 2006. Most records fall in the period September to November with surprisingly no records from December-February and then a small number during spring passage.

### **Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* A**

*Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

The commonest duck and therefore rather overlooked with few records prior to 2008 and more consistently recorded only since the 2010s.

Around 3-5 pairs breed annually on the two Lakes; it is not possible to say whether this number has increased or decreased since the 1990s.

Outside the breeding season numbers are augmented by migrants, presumed to be both locals and from further afield. Numbers are usually in the order of 20-70, but occasional counts have been higher and include the peak count, by some way of 150 on 17th December 2020.

### **Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* A**

*Former regular visitor but now rare.*

From 1995-2008, the species was a regular autumn migrant and early winter visitor with peak counts of 83 on 14th October 2001, 66 on 25th October 2008 and 65 on 5th December 1995. After 2008, numbers collapsed and there have been only six subsequent records (nine on 17th October 2009 and singles on 25th August 2016, 17th April 2017, 6th September 2020, four males on 15th February 2021 and two females on 23rd September 2021). Pintail are a particularly 'flighty' duck and it is assumed that increased disturbance may be the reason for the change, although this seems unlikely the sole reason.

Extreme dates have been 2nd September, in 2001, and 17th April, in 2017.

### **Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* A**

*Passage migrant.*

The period 1999-2004 saw birds occurring during May, June and July. Whether indicative of breeding is unclear but six birds on 22nd June 1999 suggests that possibility.

Numbers at other times are never large with ten on 3rd and 9th September and 8th October, all in 2018, the only double figure counts. Aside from the records during 1999-2004, Teal have occurred from July to April, with very few records in the winter and peaks in March/April and September/October.

### Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

*Nine records involving 21 birds. Origins uncertain.*

1996	9th-14th April	One	Male
2005	22nd January	Two	Males
2006	3rd December	Six	Four males, two females
2008	22nd February - 8th March	One	Female
2008	17th August	Two	
2010	31st January and 7th February	One	Male
2015	22nd April	Two	Pair on Carp Lake
2020	29th July-5th August	One	
2021	19th January -18th February	Up to five	Four male and female on Trout Lake

### Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* **R**

*Much declined passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Small numbers of mainly males are recorded throughout the breeding season, although breeding has not been confirmed. During summer 2019, double figure counts occurred throughout the summer, with a peak of 51 on 17th June, 44 of them male.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, low three-figure counts were not uncommon with more than 100 counted in five years between 1996 and 2003. Subsequently there has been a steady decline with counts rarely exceeding 50 in recent years, although there were 135 on 17th January 2010, 110 on 17th October 2020 and 95 on 14th February 2021.

Although many of the larger counts occur in October, this is a species prone to hard weather movements during the winter months and high counts can occur during the winter if birds are forced off the continent by severe weather.

### Tufted Duck *Aythya fuliga*

*Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

In the last two decades 1-4 pairs have bred.

Large numbers of non-breeding birds can be present during the summer months, with for example, 55 present on 6th June 2010 and 52 on 26th June 2019. Otherwise, peak counts tend to occur during September/October, although counts rarely reach three-figures with peaks of 100 in late September/early October 2020. Winter numbers are generally lower although there were 110 present on 25th January 2000 and 100 on 16th January 2020. A small surge in numbers occurs during spring, although numbers rarely exceed 50.

### Greater Scaup *Aythya marila* **R**

*Scarce winter visitor.*

2001	25th February-14th March	One	Male
2004/2005	11th December-20th February	Maximum of nine (four male and five female)	Four on 11th and 28th December seven from 29th December-23rd January with eight on 16th February with one bird on 20th February.
2006	12th-19th March	One	Male
2007	28th December	One	

2010	31st January-28th February	Maximum of two (immature male and female)	Single birds on three dates
2010	21st November	One	Female
2020	2nd-4th December	One	Female-type

Most birds appear to commute between other nearby waters and estuaries, as do other wildfowl. Occurrences appear to be in decline.

**Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* R**  
*One record.*

2016	24th March	One	Carp Lake
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**Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* R**

*Declining and now scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

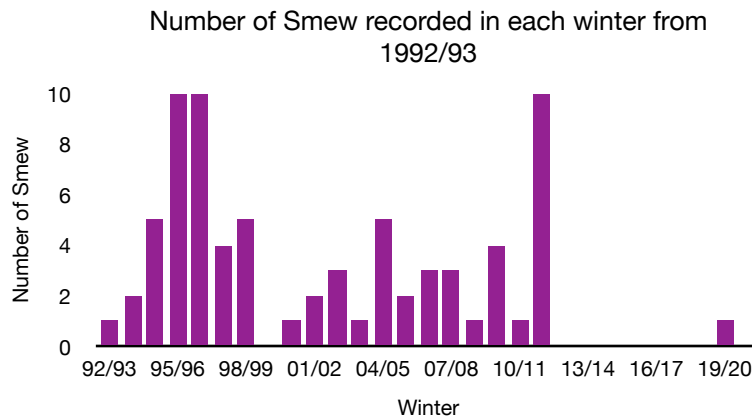
Ten on 17th February 1999 and 9th March 2003 are the highest counts, but since the latter date numbers have steadily dwindled such that currently no more than one bird occurs.

Extreme dates have been 14th May, in 2002 and 16th October, in 2005 (three).

**Smew *Mergellus albellus* R**

*Formerly scarce, almost annual visitor but rare in the last decade.*

Apart from 1999/2000, the species was recorded annually from 1993/1994 until 2011/12, but with only one further record, a male on Trout Lake on 1st January 2020.



A species that occurs in greatest numbers during spells of cold weather with numbers nationally always erratic and in general decline, the almost complete loss as a visitor in recent years is difficult to explain. Maturing lakeside vegetation made observation of Carp Lake more difficult when observation was restricted to the public footpath but perhaps increased disturbance from fishing has also contributed? The site appears perfect for the species.

Extreme dates have been, 16th November, in 2008 and 15th April, in 2006 (a pair) with the largest count being two male and eight redheads on 19th February 2012.

**Common Merganser (Goosander) *Mergus merganser***

*Three records involving seven birds.*

2001	28th December	One	Male flew west
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2012	6th February and 9th March	Two in February and one in March	Pair in February and same male in March.
2019	28th February	Four	Two male, two female
2021	29th November	One	Female, Carp Lake

Surprisingly scarce given the regular occurrence of the species nearby at Ulting and Great Totham.

**Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*** **A**

*One record.*

1996	10th January-24th February	One	Female
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**Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis***

*Former naturalised resident.*

Following the first record, of two on 15th January 1995, the species' numbers steadily increased and breeding may have occurred from 2002-2007, with four pairs present in 2002. Breeding was not definitely confirmed but probably occurred.

The peak count was 65 on 14th December 1999 with 60 on 13th September 2004. Following the start of the DEFRA cull 2003, there was no clear indication of a decline in numbers until 2005 when peak counts fell away rapidly and by 2007-2008, apart from four birds on 29th April 2007, all records were of 1-2 birds, with the very last record being of a female on 9th August 2008.

**Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*** **R**

*Two records.*

Almost extinct locally the two Lofts' records both involved two birds (pairs?), on 21st May 1998 and 7th May 2000.

**Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus***

*Common naturalised resident. Many released birds.*

Overlooked with few records submitted. Releases on adjacent land can mean large flocks can appear (e.g. 40 on 27th October 2021) to the detriment of the local fauna.

**Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa***

*Naturalised resident with numbers boosted by released birds.*

Overlooked in the past with few records until recent years.

Breeding has been confirmed on just one occasion, on 16th August 2018, when a pair with four young was noted.

Numbers are generally small, although if site visits coincide with nearby releases of birds then more may be visible; 24 on 6th January 2021 is the largest count to date.

**Common Swift *Apus apus*** **R**

*Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.*

Although not a breeding species on the site, local birds can be seen throughout the summer hunting over the lakes, although as numbers have declined nationally, fewer are seen mid-summer,

As a migrant, the species can, in cold weather, turn up in large numbers over the lakes. The largest count was 500 on 25th April 2001 with 200 noted on 30th April 2004, 150 on both 28th April 2005 and 30th May 2015, and 120 on 26th May 2002. The size of counts has generally declined, particularly over the last five years with no more than 50 noted.

After May, double figure counts were limited to 15 on 21st August 2014 with only odd birds from early August onwards. However, counts of 50 in late June and July 2020 suggest that perhaps a lack of coverage at this time may be missing this passage.

Extreme dates have been 19th April, in 2016 (two) and 4th September, in 2015.

### **Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* R**

*Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.*

The data available suggest that the species has increased over the last two decades, perhaps related to the increasing maturity of the vegetation around both Carp and Trout Lakes. In recent years up to three males have been heard (in 2016) although typically 1-2 are present. Not surprisingly perhaps, breeding has never been confirmed.

Birds generally arrive around the middle of April and not seen after mid-June.

Extreme dates have been 1st April, in 2019 and 25th June, in 2019 when one was still singing.

### **Feral Pigeon *Columba livia***

*Common year round visitor.*

Most of the records involve birds from Maldon's urban colonies visiting the chicken rearing facilities on adjacent land where they feed on the spilt grain. Occasionally small flocks will feed on recently cropped fields.

Not known to have nested.

### **Stock Dove *Columba oenas* A**

*Uncommon resident, perhaps increasing.*

A number of suitable, old hollow trees exist on site along old hedge lines and the farm buildings also provide suitable nesting locations and it is assumed that the species nests annually, although this has not been confirmed.

Otherwise, the species is seen regularly in small numbers all year round, although the only double-figure count is 20 in Northlands on 9th November 2021.

### **Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* A**

*Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Generally overlooked with no breeding records in the database, although the species must breed in numbers on the site.

Late autumn generally sees the largest numbers but the highest count involves just 300 on 3rd April 2016; clearly the species is under-recorded at all times.

### **Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* R**

*Former breeder, now very rare summer visitor.*

The rapid decline of this once fairly common species has been well documented. There are surprisingly few records in the database (12) with the first in 2001, strongly suggesting that prior to then it was considered common enough not to be 'noticed'.

During the 2000s, 1-2 'purring' males were reported but numbers subsequently dropped to the odd bird, less than annually, although two were noted on 3rd May 2016, the last time any birds were reported from the site. The fact that all records on the site were in May (between 1st and 29th) suggests that most birds recorded from 2001-2016 were migrants rather than birds on territories. Just twice, in 2004 and 2007, was it thought likely birds were on territory.

### **Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***

*Common resident.*

Small numbers are thought to breed around Lofts but there are no confirmed breeding records in the database.

Numbers are generally in single figures but occasionally in autumn, numbers are greater, with 20 on 7th September 2020 the highest reported.

### **Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus***

*Four records.*

2004	7th November	One	
2005	3rd December	Two	
2018	6th December	One	
2020	13th October	One	



Surprisingly few records and no doubt under-recorded, however there is little in the way of dense reed and shallow water which is their typical habitat.

### **Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*      A**

*Common resident, possible passage migrant and winter visitor.*

This is a surprisingly inconspicuous species, especially during the breeding season. Perhaps 3-5 pairs have been recorded breeding around the Lakes in most years.

Usually counts of 10-20 occur outside the breeding season, the highest generally in the autumn, with the peak being 23 on 13th October 2007.

### **Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra***

*Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Very difficult to assess from the limited data but perhaps a combined total of 5-10 pairs breed on Carp and Trout Lakes (ten broods noted in 2000 for example).

Numbers outside the breeding season appear to have declined with most recent high counts being in the region of 250 birds. During the period 1996-2002, however, there were near annual maximum counts of 300 birds, with the largest count being 400+ on 8th December 2001 with 355 on 12th January 2003 and 350+ on 21st December 2002.

### **Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***

*Common resident.*

A total of 4-5 pairs breed on the two Lakes each year, and have done so since the first records on the database (1993).

Numbers are at their highest from late summer when juveniles and adults are present. Double-figure counts are regular with 22 on 2nd September 2021 the highest to date. There is no evidence of migration through the site.

### **Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*      R**

*Two records.*

1994	10th May	One	
2002	15th-31st December	One	

### **Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***

*Common resident.*

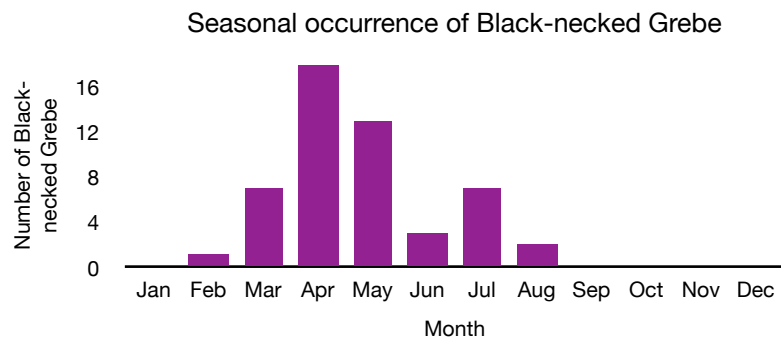
A total of 4-5 pairs have bred in recent years, with 3-4 pairs on Carp Lake and a pair on Trout Lake. Numbers tend to peak in late/summer autumn when young are still present, with counts of 20-30 usual but these soon decline as both adults and young disperse. There is no evidence of autumn or spring passage through the site and numbers in the winter are generally low with 5-10 present usual during the winter months although numbers start to creep up as early as February when pairs start displaying.

### **Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*      A**

*Annual visitor 2000-2016; may have bred in 2000 and 2001.*

During 2000 at least three birds were present and it was thought that a pair set up territory, with territorial calls heard. One bird of the pair disappeared for a month or so and was thought to be sitting on eggs. Unfortunately, there was a rapid drop in water levels during the summer, at which point the bird reappeared and it was thought at the time that the nest may have been lost at this point. Two birds returned in 2001, presumed to be last year's pair and although display was observed, breeding was not suspected and the birds were last seen in late May. From 2002-2005, 1-2 birds appeared during March-May but did not linger. In 2006, up to four birds (17th July) were present during July and August. The following year, three birds appeared during March and were present during April with display noted but apart from a lone bird on 11th August, none were noted after 13th May. In 2008 and 2009, singles birds appeared on just one date. 2010-2012 saw single birds present from late winter to May but with no sightings subsequently. Two birds were

present on a single date in April 2013 with one on one date in March 2014 and on four dates in April-May 2015. In 2016 two birds were present in early April with one still present to the very end of the month.



Extreme dates have been 17th February, in 2010 and 11th August, in both 2006 and 2007.

### Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* A

*Formerly bred. Occasional visitor.*

Between 2001 and 2004, 1-2 pairs were present and a pair bred in 2002. Other pairs have been present for short periods in 2012 and perhaps 2014.

Aside from the years that breeding occurred, all records have fallen in the months February to May (extreme dates 22nd February, in 2008 and 21st May, in 2005), apart from two on 21st July 1996. Most records involve 1-2 birds with five on 15th March 2008, the highest count.

### Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* A

*One record.*

2001	23rd April	One	
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### Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* R

*Common passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Current records refer either to fly-over birds or those feeding in the arable fields. Counts of 200+ occur in some winters with peaks being 314 on 30th January 2001 and 300 on 13th and 18th January 2016.

Absent during very late spring/early summer with extreme dates being 16th May, in 2010, and 17th June, in 2000.

### Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* A

*One record.*

2018	8th October	One	Flew over
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### Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

*Former summer visitor, probably bred.*

In the 'early' years of the Lakes, with little vegetation, large areas of gravel and minimal disturbance, the habitat was ideal for Little Ringed Plover and birds were recorded almost annually from 1994-2003. In both 1996 and 2002 pairs were present, and in the latter year two juveniles were seen on 30th July. Birds were seen in May/June in three other years. The last record was on 30th July 2003.

Extreme dates have been 24th March, in 1996 and 3rd September, in 2000.

**Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*** R

Seven records involving at least 13 birds.

2000	5th-10th May	Four from 5th-7th with one on 10th	
2001	8th May	One	
2002	16th May	One	
2008	20th April	Three	Flew north-east
2009	19th April	Two	
2015	18th April	One	
2016	19th April	One	

**Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*** R

Uncommon, predominantly winter visitor.

Recorded in 2008, 2014 and 2016-2020. All the records have come from the meadow to the west of Carp Lake and apart from two on 29th November and singles on 31st October 2017 and 19th April 2016, all have been in the period January to March. By far the most records occurred during 2019 when a small flock of up to eight birds was present, on and off, during January and February. In other years, all records were of single birds.

**Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*** A

One record.

2011	29th April	One	Flew west over Carp Lake
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**Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*** R

Three records.

1996	21st December	One	
2001	7th October	One	
2012	6th April	One	

**Ruff *Calidris pugnax*** R

One record.

2006	17th September	One	
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**Dunlin *Calidris alpina*** R

Two records.

2001	24th April	One	
2004	28th August	One	

**Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*** R

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Noted in eight winters since the first on 30th December 1995. All records have fallen in the period October to March, with the earliest arriving being one on 28th October, in 2012, and the latest 20th March, in 2017. All have been of single birds apart from two on 31st January 2019 and 11th

November 2021. It is likely that the species has been under-recorded in the past due to lack of access to the back of the site.

### Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*

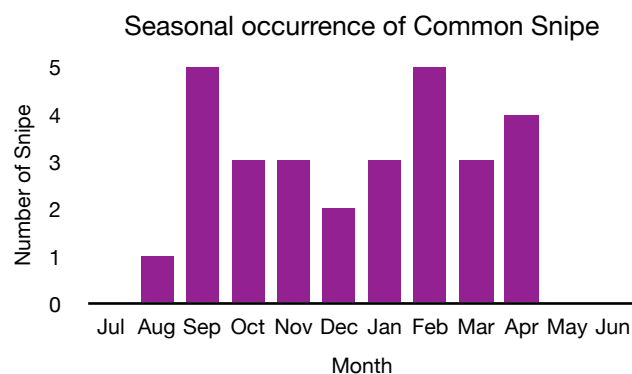
Two records.

1996	12th January	One	
2021	17th and 19th November	One	Lake Field

### Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* **A**

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

In recent years, one, rarely two birds are noted on odd days in winter and/or the migration periods. Exceptionally, three were together in a ditch north-west of Trout Lake on 29th November 2021. They can occur anywhere around Lofts with all records falling between 30th August (in 2016) and 29th April (also in 2016).

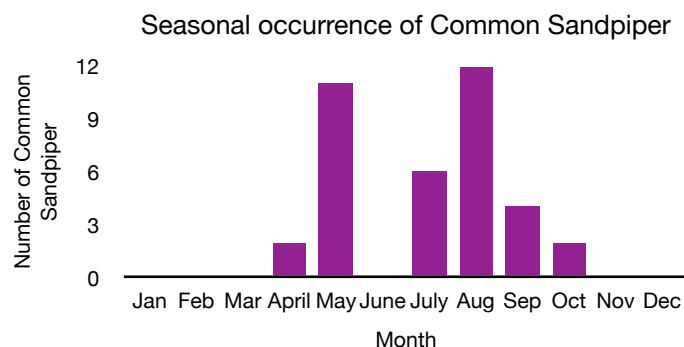


All records show a peak in September and again late winter/early spring.

### Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* **A**

Uncommon passage migrant; declining.

In recent years, almost all occurrences have been in the autumn, with the last spring records being singles on 7th May 2019 and 6th May 2012.



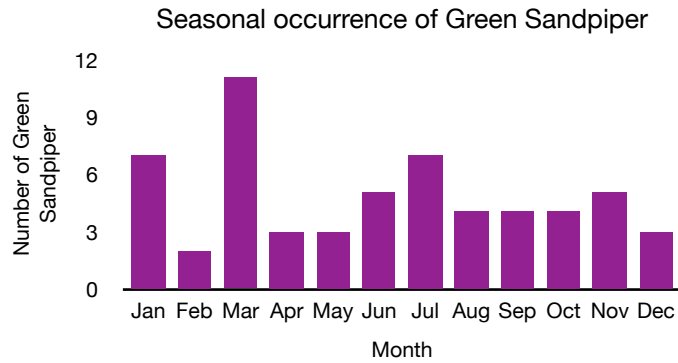
Most records are of 1-2 birds but three were present on 10th-12th May 1995 and 7th May 2011 and five on 19th July 2018.

Extreme dates have been 18th April, in 2004 and 3rd October, in 2019.

### Green Sandpiper *Tringa ocherous* **A**

Almost annual passage migrant and winter visitor.

Since 1993, recorded in all months and all years except 1998-99, 2013 and 2019 with, in recent years, rarely more than single birds involved, although 2-3 birds together were more regular prior



to 2000. There have been eight records of two birds (with two on 18th September 2020, the first multiple occurrence since two on 18th November 2001. Three birds have occurred on 10th May and 23rd June 1994 and 9th July 1997.

**Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*** A

*One record.*

2020	23rd November	One	Flew over
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Surprisingly rare.

**Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*** A

*Two records.*

1993	15th August	One	
2002	3rd August	One	

**Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*** A

*Former annual migrant in small numbers.*

Increasing vegetation/higher water levels/increased disturbance around the Lakes means this species no longer visits Lofts, with the last record on 27th August 2019.

From the mid 1990s to mid 2000s, a winter roost used to form on the island on Carp Lake; up to eight birds were recorded but there were nine present on 18th November 2001 and 8th December 2002. Outside of the winter months odd birds were noted during spring and autumn migration.

**Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*** R

*Two records.*

1994	12th February	One	1st winter
2001	29th March	One	Adult

**Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*** A

*Common, year round visitor. Has bred.*

The species nested on the islands in Carp Lake in most years until 2012, numbers depending on water levels. A peak of 72 nesting birds was noted in 2007. The only subsequent breeding record was a pair that bred on the floats on Trout Lake in 2016.

Otherwise the species is common in all months, with many of the largest peak counts occurring in March: 400 in 2008; 200 in 2013; 300 in 2019; 200 in 2020. In addition, 500 birds were following a tractor on 28th September 2018.

**Little Gull *Hydrocoleus minutus***

*Very scarce passage migrant. Ten records involving 14 birds.*

1996	6th April	Three	
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1999	22nd May	One	1st summer
2000	6th May	One	1st summer
2000	12th-15th May	Two - different	1st summer
2010	6th April	Two	
2011	27th March	One	Moulting into summer plumage
2011	5th May	One	Adult summer
2013	24th April	One	Adult summer
2016	26th March	One	Adult winter
2019	11th-13th April	One	

### **Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaeetus melanocephalus*** A

*Late winter and summer visitor in very small numbers.*

After the first on 24th March 1996, the species has been recorded less than annually in very small numbers. In years when the species occurred, there were usually just 1-2 records, although in 2000, an adult was seen regularly between March and June. All records have involved 1-2 birds, apart from three on 18th May 2014. 'Limpy', a well known individual with a damaged leg that was present around Maldon area for many years was seen at Lofts in 2001 and 2007. All records have fallen in the period February to July.

### **Mew (Common) Gull *Larus canus*** A

*Winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers. Rare in summer.*

Usually present in single figures, the largest count has been 15 on 14th February 2021. Otherwise, the majority of records occur from August to March, although in both 2001 and 2002 single birds were noted in June and July.

### **Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*** A

*Annual but records generally involve single birds in late winter/spring and late summer.*

Completely overlooked until 2016 since when recorded on 16 occasions, all singles apart from two on 30th April 2019. Of the 16 records, four were in February, one in March, four in April, two in May and five in August. Almost all records have involved sub-adult birds.

### **Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*** R

*Common year round visitor. Possibly bred in 2019.*

There are no records on the database prior to 2016.

In 2019, a pair built a nest on the island on Carp Lake, but the outcome of the breeding attempt is unknown.

Until 2021, 1-3 birds were recorded outside the breeding season but counts of up to 50 during November 2021 suggest that the species has begun to use Carp Lake more. A general increase in sightings is probably due to the establishment of a breeding colony in the industrial area of Heybridge.

### **Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michahellis*** A

*Three records, possibly all of the same bird.*

2010	12th December	One	Adult
2011/12	4th December and 12th and 23rd January and 3rd February	One	Adult
2012	31st October	One	Adult



**Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* A**

*Common year round visitor.*

Small numbers of birds visit Lofts, usually to bathe and wash. Numbering rarely more than 1-3 birds, the species is least common in the winter when many of the local breeding birds leave the area.

**Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis***

*One record of three birds.*

1996	7th April	Three	
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**Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* A**

*Common summer visitor. Formerly bred.*

Single pairs nested periodically on the small stony island on Carp Lake until the early 2010s but since then water levels have been erratic and disturbance from anglers in boats has meant that none have bred for almost a decade.

Otherwise, the species is a common summer visitor and passage migrant in small numbers with the largest numbers occurring during spring with the only double-figure counts being: 11 on 26th April 2019, ten on 1st May 2018 and 17th April 2017.

The earliest record is one on 9th April, in 2018, and the latest one on 14th September, in 2013.

**Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* A**

*Three records of at least eight birds.*

2019	14th-16th April	At least four	Carp Lake
2019	8th-9th October	One	Juvenile. Carp Lake
2021	23rd April	Three	Carp Lake

**Black Tern *Chlidonias niger***

*Five records involving 12 birds.*

2000	27th April	One	
2000	7th-12th May	Two	Assume different to above
2005	19th September	Two	
2007	1st May	Six	
2008	20th April	One	

**Red-throated Loon (Red-throated Diver) *Gavia stellata***

*Two records.*

1996	24th January and 26th March	One	
1997	8th-14th February	One	

**Black-throated Loon (Black-throated Diver) *Gavia arctica* A**

*One record.*

1995	16th February	One	
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### White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

One record.

2003	25th April	One	Flew over
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### Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common visitor all year. Formerly bred.

Following the creation of a non-breeding roost (see below) on the main island on Carp Lake, some individuals began to linger during the summer and from 2010-2012 a breeding colony was founded, with two nests in 2010, three in 2011 and 12 in 2012. Unfortunately, coarse fishing activity increased rapidly at this time and the colony quickly disappeared through deliberate persecution. It relocated to Chigborough Lakes across the road where the colony remains today. Cormorants began to roost at the site prior to 2000, although the database provides no actual data to confirm this. In 2000, a count of 110 was noted on 22nd September, with at least 150 the following year on 9th December. By 2003, the roost had increased to 216 (13th December), the highest count to date. Since then increased disturbance has limited the numbers arriving and most now use Chigborough Lakes to roost, although birds regularly hunt on both waters.

### Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

One record.

2012	7th-21st March and 6th and 13th April	One	Field west of Carp Lake
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First found over on the paddocks by Chigborough Lakes, this individual was often seen in the field west of Carp Lake. It wandered down to Chelmsford when not at Lofts. Originally ringed as a chick in the Cota Donana, Spain on 7th May 2007 it was also seen at Borth, Ceredigion, from 3rd-25th February 2012.

### Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* A

Two records.

2012	6th April	One	Flew over
2021	9th September	One	Roosting

The 2012 bird was about the 16th Essex record and the first for the Maldon area.

With breeding now occurring at Chigborough Lakes and the species increasing rapidly across the country, records are likely to increase.

### Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common year round visitor.

Although breeding has never been proved it is possible that there was a nest in the Cormorant colony present on the island on Carp Lake in the early 2010s.

Otherwise the species is a regular visitor in small numbers and can be found anywhere around Carp and Trout Lakes, and is also a regular fly-over. Always wary, numbers tend to be low but 20 were present on 6th June 2019 at a time when no anglers were on site.

### Great Egret *Egret alba* A

Five records of seven birds.

2018	8th February	One	
2018	1st October	One	
2019	11th April	One	Carp Lake
2020	16th January	One	Flew over
2020	26th November	Three	Flying south

### Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

*Common year round visitor.*

The first record from the site concerned three roosting on 20th August 1996.

Thereafter numbers slowly built up, with 51 roosting in November and December 2002, 124 in November 2005 and 134 in September 2006, still the highest roost count.

After 2008, and for over a decade disturbance to Carp Lake saw the main roost transfer to Chigborough but with disturbance reduced over the last three years a roost has reformed with peaks of 115 on 20th August 2018 and 111 on 11th September 2021.

Otherwise small numbers can be disturbed from around the lakes at any time of year, although records between December and February are scarce, although it is interesting to note that when the large roost was present on Carp Lake island, large numbers were present through to February (e.g. in 2005 there were 66 at roost on 17th February).

### Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* A

*Four records.*

1999	13th October	One	
2000	10th June	One	Flew south
2001	21st April	One	Flew north
2019	29th September	One	Flew south

### Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* A

*Fairly common year round visitor. May breed.*

Pairs had been seen on several occasions displaying over the site and birds with prey have also been noted during the breeding season, strongly suggestive of breeding on or close to Lofts, although there has never been confirmation.

Outside the breeding season, 1-2 birds are seen in all months, although from September-November recent observations have suggested slightly more birds present, although whether these are migrants or locally bred birds is unclear.

### Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* A

*Seven records.*

1997	6th April	One	Female
2009	3rd May	One	
2010	4th May	One	
2014	12th October	One	
2015	3rd May	One	Carrying prey
2019	12th April	One	
2021	27th October	One	Immature

Suprisingly rare!

### Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* R

*Two records.*

2004	28th November	One	Ringtail
2010	23rd January	One	Male

### Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

*Increasing passage migrant; now resident nearby.*

Since the first record, of one on 6th April 2004, there have been a further eleven records with the species annual from 2015 (except for 2020, Covid year).

All the records have fallen in the period March to May, apart from the most recent on 17th July 2021.

### Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

*Now common year round resident. Confirmed breeding in 2020.*

The status of the species has changed significantly from the 1990s when it was still just an occasional visitor.

Breeding has been confirmed once, in 2020, when a pair raised one young in a tree just north of the farm buildings. Other attempts may have taken place nearby but breeding has not been confirmed.

With a healthy population in woodlands to the north, double-figure counts are not unusual, but as these tend to occur more regularly in spring and autumn, migrants are also assumed to be involved. The highest count was 11 drifting over from the north on 25th March 2016.

### Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

*Scarce year round resident. Breeds in farm buildings occasionally.*

First reported in 2003, with records almost annual from 2009. In recent years, it has become apparent that breeding occurs periodically within the farm buildings, with birds seen venturing inside the buildings, once with food, in both 2014 and 2018. Outside the breeding season, records are irregular, but in 2020 a single bird took to roosting in the buildings during winters at both ends of the year. Of the 17 records in the database, ten occurred from April-June, a time when Barn Owl with young will hunt during the day, suggesting that breeding has probably occurred more times than thought.

### Little Owl *Athene noctua*

*Rapidly declining resident.*

A pair were regularly recorded in the hedge along the north side of the paddock, particularly the far north-east corner where the oak in the corner of the field appeared to be the nesting tree. Possibly two pairs were present in the late 1990s. However since 2017 sightings have become extremely irregular and the last was on 5th August 2020.

### Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* **A**

*Year round visitor. Breeding status?*

A lack of records (just nine on the database) points to a lack of night-time coverage. At least three calling before dawn on 1st January 2020 perhaps give some indication that the species is a likely year round resident and breeder but until a proper survey is carried out, further comment is no more than speculation.

### Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

*Resident.*

Records from all months suggest that the species may breed on site but this has not been confirmed.

There is no discernible increase in numbers outside the breeding season.

### Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

*One record.*

2011	5th May	One	Far south corner hedgerow of paddock.
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### Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates minor* **R**

*One record of two birds.*

1994	28th June	Two	Male and female
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Perhaps a breeding pair but not recorded subsequently.

### Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

*Resident.*

Drumming birds have been noted in most years and breeding is assumed to take place annually. Outside the breeding season, 1-2 birds are recorded regularly, although it appears that the species may be less common in the winter months.

### Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

*Resident.*

Status much the same as Great Spotted, although possibly more regular in winter, although this may be down to the species being more conspicuous in its behaviour.

### Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* **A**

*Resident.*

With 1-2 birds being seen all year, it is assumed that breeding probably occurs on the site. Numbers reported appear to remain consistent throughout the year.

### Merlin *Falco columbarius* **R**

*Two records.*

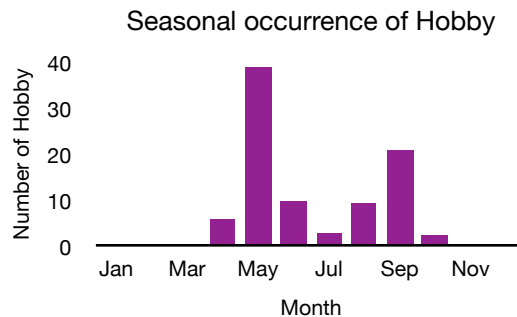
2007	18th February	One	
2007	11th November	One	

### Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

*Principally summer migrant. May have bred?*

Although breeding has never been proven, in 2019 birds were noted throughout the summer months and in 2021, a bird was seen flying over carrying food.

On migration, 1-2 birds are usually present but there were four on 30th September 2019 and 6th



September 2020 with six present on 7th May 2011. Far more occur in May than in any other month.

Extreme dates, 18th April (2004) and 1st October (2018 and 2021).

### Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

*Nine records.*

2001	23rd December	One	
2004	13th September	One	
2009	15th March	One	
2010	15th March	One	
2012	30th September	One	
2016	20th May	One	

2019	13th August	One	
2020	1st October	One	
2020	10th October	One	

### **Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius***

*Fairly common visitor.*

There are far fewer summer records than at other times of year, and it is thus uncertain whether the species breeds on site.

Outside the breeding season counts are usually up to around five birds. However, in years when acorns are scarce, birds will wander further and then higher counts occurring with the maxima being ten on 3rd October 2019 and 15 on 8th March 2008.

### **Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica***

*Common resident.*

The species breeds around the site; their large, messy nests are relatively easy to spot.

Although late autumn will see large totals that reach double figures, the highest count involved a winter roost of 50 birds on 29th December 1998; no roosts have been identified subsequently.

### **Western Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula***

*Common and increased resident.*

Breeding is thought to occur on the site.

Large flocks can be seen around and over the site from late summer, through to spring. The biggest gatherings, of several thousand birds, are those flying to roost at Chigborough Lakes. However, double-figure flocks can regularly be found feeding in the arable fields.

### **Rook *Corvus frugilegus*      A**

*Year round visitor.*

Birds occur year round but breeding has not been noted.

The largest counts occur from late summer onwards when flocks can be found on the grass meadow to the west of Carp Lake and on freshly ploughed fields. Commonly associating with Jackdaw, three figure counts are not uncommon with 400 the peak counts on several occasions, in late summer and during winter.

### **Carrion Crow *Corvus corone***

*Common resident and perhaps passage migrant.*

A common sight around Lofts, particularly in the arable fields. The species almost certainly breeds on the site, although surprisingly there are no confirmed breeding records!

Surprisingly large congregations of Crows occur on the arable fields, with peaks of 150 in December 2018 and March 2019. This flock moves widely around the local area - tracking of birds with pale feathering, has confirmed that they also occur out towards Goldhanger and in the fields to the south of Southey Creek.

### **Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus***

*One record involving 16 birds.*

1996	26th February	16	
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### **Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus***

*Common resident and perhaps passage migrant.*

Small numbers present throughout the year. Some evidence of increases from mid-August suggest some movement through the site.

### **Great Tit *Parus major***

*Common resident.*

Occurs in fewer numbers, at all times, than Blue Tit but data is limited.



### **Skylark *Alauda arvensis* R**

*Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

With improved coverage of the site over the last couple of years, 3-4 singing males/pairs have been recorded; previously 1-2 were recorded in some years.

Outside the breeding season, numbers remain small with numbers rarely exceeding ten and then tending to involve birds moving over during October with the highest count being 30, mainly heading north, on 8th October 2018.

### **Sand Martin *Riparia riparia***

*Common passage migrant.*

A regularly recorded migrant, and often the first to occur. Counts have not changed significantly over the years with several three-figure counts noted: 100 on 15th August 2019; 150 on 19th August 2004 and 6th April 2015; 200 on 29th August 2004 and 2nd September 2021.

Numbers tend to peak from mid-August to early September in autumn, although spring migration appears to be more dispersed.

Extreme dates have been 4th March, with three in 2019 (also at Chigborough) and 1st October, with three in 2020.

### **Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica***

*Common summer visitor and passage migrant.*

The database does not hold any breeding records, although it is possible that the species bred around the farm buildings until recently.

Migrants are usually noted from early April although the earliest was on 23rd March in 2001 with largest numbers moving through mid April to early May. Peak counts in the spring have been: 150 on 3rd May 2010 and 1st May 2018; 100 on 1st May 2004, 9th April 2018 and 7th May 2021.

Autumn passage appears to be more protracted with numbers peaking from mid-August to late September and generally involving smaller movements with the highest counts being: 80 on 5th September 2016; 50 on 28th September 2020. Birds continue to trickle through the site during October during which the highest count was 16 on 10th October 2017. The latest bird was one on 16th October 2020.

### **Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* R**

*Much declined summer visitor, principally a passage migrant.*

Whether House Martin ever bred on the farm buildings is not known.

Today, with breeding numbers declining nationally and locally, numbers visiting Lofts during the summer are very low with numbers in the summer months in recent years struggling to reach double-figures.

Migrating flocks rarely reach double figures with just four noted: 100 on 20th September 2001 and 16th May 2013; 150 on 15th August 2019; 170 on 13th September 2004.

Extreme dates, 29th March (two in 2018) and 17th October (four in 2017).

### **Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti***

*Increasing resident.*

The first records for the site were during 2005, when two calling males were noted from October.

The following spring there were probably two territorial males present. Until 2021, there appear to have been no more than two singing males around the site during the breeding season, but up to five have been recorded outside the breeding season recently (2021). If silent Cetti's Warblers can be extremely difficult to detect so it is possible that more birds may be present than records suggest.

### **Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus***

*Common resident.*

Found throughout the site and at all times of year, with breeding confirmed on several occasions, although it is assumed to be a regular and numerous breeder.

Numbers are at their greatest in autumn and early winter when large mixed flock of tits occur, with counts of up to 40 noted.

### **Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* A**

*Much decreased summer visitor and passage migrant.*

In line with national trends, numbers of singing males have declined from 3-5 in the 2000s to 1-2 in the 2010s to none in 2021.

Passage numbers have only been recorded in the last five years or so but 10-15 birds have been noted on odd days in August with the peak being 22 on

### **Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita***

*Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Occasional in winter.*

Has increased over the last decade, with 5-10 singing males present during the spring and early summer.

Correspondingly, numbers during the autumn have also increased and there have been some quite large 'falls' of birds with 2019 seeing particularly high numbers, with double-figure counts almost weekly from mid-August to mid-September, and a peak of 40 on 15th August. In other years, peak counts have usually been of the order of ten, all within the mid-August to early September period with 15 noted on 21st August 2014 and 13th August 2018.

Extreme dates have been 27th March, in 2010, and 8th October, in 2017.

### **Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* A**

*Summer visitor.*

Scarcer than Reed Warbler with perhaps 1-2 singing males present in most recent years, a possible decline from a decade or more ago when 2-3 were noted; whether any stay to breed is unclear.

Remarkably the species has not been recorded beyond the end of June.

Extreme dates are 20th April, in 2008, and 26th June, in 2019.

### **Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus***

*Summer visitor and passage migrant.*

Currently around five pairs breed in the thicker areas of seedbed around the two lakes, a figure that appears to have increased in recent years, presumably as reed beds have matured.

Outside the breeding season, numbers tend to peak in late summer and, although probably mostly involving Lofts' breeding birds, there have been very small arrivals of apparent migrants in August/early September, with the highest count being seven on 6th September 2021.

Extreme dates have been 16th April, in 2001 and 19th September, in 2020.

### **Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla***

*Increasing summer visitor and passage migrant.*

Small numbers breed in the scrubby areas of the site with influxes of migrants noticeable from mid-August.

Extreme dates: 20th March (2017) and 16th October (2019).

### **Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin***

Very rare passage migrant. Six records.

2010	1st May	One	Singing male
2015	30th April	One	
2015	22nd August	One	
2016	28th April	One	Singing male
2016	3rd May	One	Same as above?
2018	6th September	One	

### **Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca***

*Fairly common summer visitor.*

The number of singing males present each year appears to have increased slightly with 3-5 now present; prior to 2010 1-2 appeared to be normal.

In line with the slight increase in singing males, the number of birds noted passing through during the autumn (spring passage is not obvious) has increased with double-figure accounts occurring on three occasions: ten on 21st August 2014; ten on 15th August and 1st September 2019; 15 on 5th September 2019.

Extreme dates, 13th April, in 2016 and 11th October, in 2020.

### **Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis*      A**

*Resident and passage migrant.*

In recent years three-five singing males have been present, and it assumed that breeding takes place.

As a migrant, recent observations suggest a small increase in numbers on site during mid to late August but data is insufficient to say any more.

### **Goldcrest *Regulus regulus***

*Scarce year round visitor and passage migrant.*

The database contains no summer (June-July) records so breeding has yet to be confirmed. Most records are during September to March with a handful of occurrences in August and April/May. All records are of 1-2 birds.

### **Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*      A**

*Common resident.*

Another common, but grossly under-recorded, species with no breeding records in the database, although clearly the species does breed throughout the site.

With virtually all data simply confirming a presence, without numbers, further comment is not possible.

### **Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*      R**

*Common year round visitor, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

There is no clear evidence that the species has bred at Lofts although flocks of mainly juvenile birds occur from late May onwards. The lack of data however, with very little available prior to 2015, suggest that the species is overlooked.

Outside the breeding season, numbers appear from last summer onwards, although during the early 2000s a roost formed in sallows with 2,000 in June and 2,500 in August 2001 with 3,000 in June 2003. There have been no comparable counts subsequently with the highest being 200 on 13th October 2020, 150 on 8th March 2018 and 100 on 29th May 2019, the latter presumably relating to flocks of locally-bred birds.

### **Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*      A**

*Uncommon resident. Passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Under-recorded with records only since 2008. One-two singing birds have been present on site in the last few years and although breeding has never been confirmed, it is assumed that it occurs annually.

The largest numbers tend to occur during late September/October when migrants are generally passing overhead or dropping into the site. Numbers are never large with rarely more than 5-10 around the site but overhead 50 were noted heading north-west in one hour on 15th October 2019 and 12 the next day.

### **Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*      R**

*Very scarce visitor.*

The 14 records of Mistle Thrush have all fallen in the period October to April, except for the first record which involved a pair present in the breeding season during 1994; breeding was not confirmed.

Otherwise, the remaining 13 records included a series of records between 3rd October (four birds) and 5th December (two birds) 2019 with one seen on three occasions within the period. Of the remaining records, six were of singles, two of two and one of three with five on 9th November 2008.

### Redwing *Turdus iliacus* A

*Winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers.*

The database is surprisingly light of records and numbers of Redwing are low at Lofts with few records other than odd individuals flying over at times of migration. This may be due to the lack of dense berry-laden scrubby areas which, as at nearby Chigborough can encourage feeding flocks to form. No counts of more than ten birds have been noted.

### Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

*Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

As with most breeding passerines, comprehensive surveys of the site are lacking, but needless to say the species is a common breeding bird, being found all around Lofts Farm.

Outside the breeding season, small influxes are evident in late September/October as birds arrive from the continent, and again in spring as birds move back through the area. Few counts of more than 20 have been noted.

### Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* R

*Common passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Typically slightly later arriving than the other winter thrush, the Redwing, numbers vary markedly from year to year. In some years, counts may be only in low double figures, but in others three figure counts are not unusual. The largest count involved 275 on 4th January 2004, whilst in early 2016, around 200 were present.

The earliest arrival date involved two on 8th October 2018, with the latest being 120 coming in to roost on 1st April 2018.

### Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* R

*Scarce passage migrant.*

The species has been recorded in just seven years, between 2014 and 2021. In all, the 13 records probably involved 11 birds with all records falling between 11th August (in 2021) and 13th September (in 2015).

### European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

*Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

A ubiquitous species which tends to be under-recorded. Up to six singing males have been noted during the breeding season but this is certainly an under estimate.

Outside the breeding season, insufficient data means little meaningful comment can be made.

Very recent observation during October and November 2021 confirm migration to and through the site with counts of 25 plus being noted.

### Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* R

*May have bred. Increasingly scarce summer visitor.*

Single singing males were reported between 2001 and 2003, and again in 2010, with birds also singing briefly in 2018 and 2019. Birds have tended to occur along the scrubby southern boundary with Scraley Road.

### European Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* A

*One record of at least two birds.*

2019	24th-27th August	Two, at least on former date with one still on latter.	
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A long overdue first record, with birds in the 'Christmas Tree Spinney' and the north side of Carp Lake.

### Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* A

*Three records.*

2000	23rd-24th April	One	Female
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2011	2nd May	One	Male
2015	13th September	One	Immature

**European Stonechat *Saxicola rubetra***

*One record.*

2021	25th October	One	
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**Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* A**

*Five records of seven birds.*

1996	30th March	Three	
2016	5th April	One	
2016	30th August	One	
2016	23rd October	One	
2019	2nd October	One	

Surprisingly few.

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* R**

*Resident.*

Very small numbers formerly bred around the farm buildings, until 2020 at least.

Away from the buildings the species is remarkably rare with just a handful of records on the database and usually along the gardens of the houses fronting Broad Street Green Road.

**Duncock *Prunella modularis* A**

*Common resident.*

Rather overlooked in the record with most observations merely recording a presence. Little can be said apart from the fact that they are a year round presence, tending to prefer the thicker, dryer areas of scrub around the farm buildings and along the hedgerows.

**Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* R**

*Possible rare summer resident, otherwise passage migrant in small numbers.*

Very occasional records in late May and June suggest that perhaps the odd bird may be resident during the summer months but there is no data to suggest breeding.

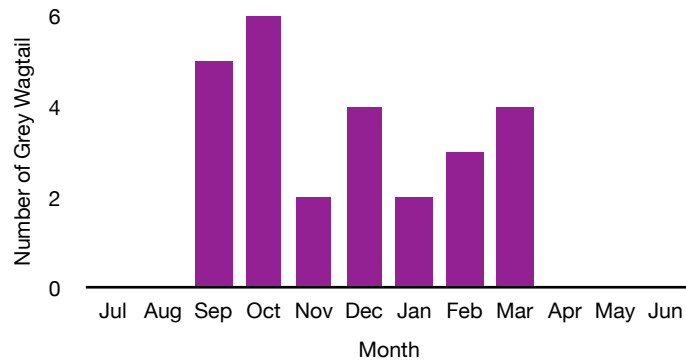
Spring passage occurs through April into mid-May with small numbers recorded on the paddock area, the peaks being 13 on 19th April 2014 and 11 on 14th April 2015, but more usual, no more than odd birds. During the autumn, passage birds are noted from mid-August and into the first week of September. Usually no more than 3-4 birds are present although there were ten on 13th August 2018.

Extreme dates are, 27th March, in 2011 and 13th September, in 2015 and 2016 (two birds on both occasions).

**Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***

*Annual passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Grey Wagtail have been recorded annually since 2008, prior to which, from the first record on 1st February 1994, the species was noted in seven out of 14 years. All records have been of single birds apart from two on 3rd and 29th September 2015, 3rd October 2019 and 16th October 2020. Birds have been recorded between 2nd September (in 2016) and 27th March (in 2010) with passage obvious in spring and autumn -



**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba***

**Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii***

*Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Birds may breed occasionally around the buildings with odd birds seen carrying food.

Outside the breeding season, small numbers can be seen at any time of year. Numbers peak in late autumn/winter when small flocks can be found feeding in the ploughed arable fields, with 40 on 6th January 2021 the largest count at this time. During spring, mixed flocks of wagtails pitch up in the Paddocks were 10-15 have occurred on a few occasions.

**White Wagtail *Motacilla alba alba***

*Four records of five birds.*

2016	21st June	One	
2018	1st-5th April	One	Paddock
2019	14th-15th April	Two on 14th with one next day	Paddock
2019	24th April	One	Paddock

**Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* A**

*Passage migrant and winter visitor in small numbers.*

Aside from a singing male on 24th March 2007, there has never been any suggestion of breeding. Meadow Pipit pass over in small numbers in autumn, and there is also a small, but apparently declining wintering population. In the the autumn, counts of 10-20 is normal, although there were 55 present on 1st October 2020, mostly in Lake Field. Spring passage concerns odd birds passing high heading north.

In winter very small numbers (1-2) will linger on the arable fields.

**Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs***

*Common resident and passage migrant. Fewer birds during breeding season in recent years.*

Under-recorded across the site, specific comment is difficult apart from stating that small numbers are present all year right across Lofts Farm, with apparent increases in spring and autumn. Numbers rarely make double-figures.

**Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla***

*Five records of six birds.*

2010	11th December	Two	
2017	31st October	One	
2019	14th April	One	Male, Carp Lake trees
2020	15th October	One	Flew over



2020	16th October	One	Flew over
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**Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*** A

*Breeding status uncertain. Otherwise, visitor in very small numbers.*

Although small numbers of Bullfinch, usually no more than 1-2 birds, are recorded all year, confirmed breeding on the site has never been proven. A healthy population exists over at Chigborough Lakes as is the source of most records.

**European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*** R

*Resident, has decreased.*

Under-recorded but the species has declined in the last decade both at Lofts and nationally. Greenfinch almost certainly breed around Lofts.

The last couple of years has seen higher counts than have been seen for a few years, for instance 28 on 27th October 2021, so perhaps there are signs of recovery.

**Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*** R

*Scarce resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.*

As small numbers are recorded during the summer months, including breeding plumage males in nesting habitat, it is assumed the species breeds in small numbers, 2-3 pairs. However, this has yet to be confirmed.

Outside the breeding season numbers tend to be at their greatest in March/April, suggesting movement through the site at that time. At this time, birds have been seen coming into communal roosts with a peak of 45 note on 20th March 2010. In most years numbers in late autumn/early winter are not significant. However, in 2019, a flock of 110 were present in Lake and Barn Fields from 23rd-26th November. Numbers in winter are usually small, but once again in certain years flocks can occur with a long staying one during December 2015 and January 2016, peaking at 40 late in the latter month; 40 were also noted on 1st January 2006.

**Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret*** R

*Almost annual passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Numbers are generally small with single figure counts typical, although flocks sometimes make it into double-figures with 15 on 1st October 2020 and 14 on 13th October 2021 the highest. Extreme dates, 3rd May, in 2016, and 1st October, in 2020.

**Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*** A

*Vagrant. One record.*

1997	6th July	One	Flew over
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**European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis***

*Common, year round resident passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Although unproven, it is assumed breeding occurs on site as young birds are seen during the breeding season.

Numbers on site are at their greatest during the autumn, and again in the spring, but generally involve low double-figure counts. The largest count to date is 70+ on 14th March 1993.

**Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus***

*Annual passage migrant and winter visitor, in variable but generally small numbers.*

Numbers generally remain in single figures, although occasionally during migration period, larger numbers can be counted, and include peak counts for Lofts of 32 flying over on 8th September 2020 and 14 on 16th October in the same year.

All records fall between September and April with most records during migration, with fewer present in the winter.

Extreme dates have been 6th September, in 2020, and 12th April, in 2016.

### **Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* R**

*Former rare visitor, may have bred.*

Prior to 2021, there were just seven records on the database, all in the period 2005-2008, with three being of single singing males on: 9th April 2006; 29th April and 5th May 2007; 7th June 2008. The remaining four records were: 15 feeding on split grain on 20th April 2008; four on 28th October 2005; one on 31st December 2006 with perhaps the same bird on 7th January 2007. In 2021, a flock of up to 15-20 birds was present for a few days in late October ranging between the southwest corner of Lake Field and across to Barn Field.

### **Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* R**

*Scarce visitor.*

Prior to autumn 2021, there had been just six records, in five different years involving seven birds, with two on 15th December 2005 the only count of more than one. In autumn 2021, up to 13 birds (29th November) were found ranging across Lake, Barn and Home Field. Many had been feeding with Reed Bunting and Meadow Pipits in the field that has gone to seed where the site is to be developed with housing. At least some of the birds were around from late September into mid November.

### **Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* A**

*Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.*

One to two pairs are thought to nest around the site in most years.

Outside the breeding season, numbers tend to be at their highest in spring when there is a well documented inland passage, involving mostly males. Up to ten (8th March 2019, 5th April 2018) have been recorded at this time. Otherwise, 2-4 birds may be recorded during the autumn and winter.

## **CATEGORY D SPECIES**

Species that may be of wild origin but for which definite proof is awaited.

### **Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea***

*One record.*

2012	20th September	One	
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### **Wood Duck *Aix sponsa***

*One record.*

2000	14th April and 21st May	One	
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## **CATEGORY E SPECIES**

Species that are likely to be escapes from captivity.

### **Red-breasted Goose *Branta rufficollis***

*One record.*

A single bird with yellow and red ring on the left leg was present from 1st March until 13th April 2008. It was also seen at Abberton Reservoir.

### **Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus***

*One record.*

1995	10th December	One	
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Although possibly a wild bird, this was felt, at the time, to be a feral bird.

### Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Five records.

2000	3rd September	One	
2001	8th-27th December	One	
2005	1st and 22nd January	One	
2010	18th April	One	
2013	23rd February	One	Plus a hybrid Bar-headed x Greylag

### Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*

Occurs far less frequently than formerly.

Recorded regularly from 1999-2001 with up to four reported (1st February 2000) and with a possible pair on 15th April 2000. Four were again recorded on 7th August 2001, with the next record of two during February and March 2005. Subsequently single birds have been recorded in 2006, 2009 and 2010.

### Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

One record

2000	14th June	One	
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### Chiloe Wigeon *Mareca sibilatrix*

Two records.

2001	8th and 23rd December	Two	
2003	25th May and 26th June	One	

### Harris's Hawk *Parabuteo unicinctus*

One record.

2011	16th April	One	
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## OTHER WILDLIFE

### LEPIDOPTERA

#### Butterflies

The following species have been recorded on the site. Brief statuses are given:

Essex Skipper	Grassland species; relatively common
Small Skipper	Grassland species; relatively common
Large Skipper	Grassland species; least common of the skippers
Orange-tip	Scrub/grassland species; common
Large White	Found in all open habitats; very common
Small White	Found in all open habitats; very common
Green-veined White	Found in all open habitats; very common
Brimstone	Buckthorn feeder; uncommon

Wall	Had become extinct in 1990s. Seen again in 2019 and 2020, the only site in Maldon district
Speckled Wood	Shade/woodland species; fairly common
Small Heath	Grassland species; fairly common
Meadow Brown	Grassland species; very common. Hundreds often viewable over west meadow soon after cutting.
Gatekeeper	Scrub species; very common
Red Admiral	Found in all habitats. Common with numbers bolstered by migrants
Painted Lady	Found in all numbers. Numbers very variable from scarce to abundant depending on arrival of migrants.
Peacock	Found in all habitats. Common.
Small Tortoiseshell	Found in all habitats. Numbers much reduced in recent years and now scarce.
Comma	Scrub/woodland species. Common
Small Copper	Open short grass species. Found along footpaths, drives etc. Fairly common.
Purple Hairstreak	Oak feeder; fairly common
White-letter Hairstreak	Discovered in 2021 in elms in far south-east corner of Spicketts.
Holly Blue	Ivy/Holly species; fairly common
Brown Argus	Open short grass species. Found along footpaths, drives etc. Fairly common.
Common Blue	Open short grass species. Found along footpaths, drives etc. Fairly common.

## DRAGONFLIES

The following species have been recorded on the site. Brief statuses are given:

Willow Emerald	Colonist. Common
Common Emerald	Occasional.
Banded Demoiselle	Wanderer from Navigation; scarce
Azure Damselfly	Common
Common Blue Damselfly	Common
Red-eyed Damselfly	Much increased in last two decades; fairly common
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	Colonist; fairly common
Blue-tailed Damselfly	Common
Large Red Damselfly	Common
Southern Hawker	Fairly common.
Brown Hawker	Fairly common, perhaps more so in last decade
Migrant Hawker	Common

Emperor Dragonfly	Common
Hairy Dragonfly	Much increased in last decade; fairly common
Broad-bodied Chaser	Common
Scarce Chaser	Previously only found on the Navigation, now more widely distributed
Four-spotted Chaser	Common
Black-tailed Skimmer	Common
Ruddy Darter	Common
Common Darter	Abundant

## MAMMALS

The species in the chart below have been specifically recorded on the site. Other than the species which tend to be seen during the day, no attempt has been made at providing a status.

As no small mammal or bat surveys have so far been undertaken, this list is far from a complete record of mammals using the site. Species overlooked are likely to include, as a minimum, Wood Mouse, Field Vole, Brown Rat, Mole, Common Shrew, Weasel and several bats, such as pipistrelle (2-3 species), Daubenton's and Long-eared.

Red Fox	Not common. Local persecution is an issue with a stink pit found just to the South of Sains Farm in 2021
Rabbit	Common, but less abundant in the last decade
Brown Hare	Fairly common in fields to the north of Trout Lake
Grey Squirrel	Too common!
Bank Vole	One on 16th October 2016
Muntjac	Too common!
Badger	May be a boar's holt along Public Footpath; otherwise status unknown
Noctule Bat	One in broad daylight on 3rd April 2016