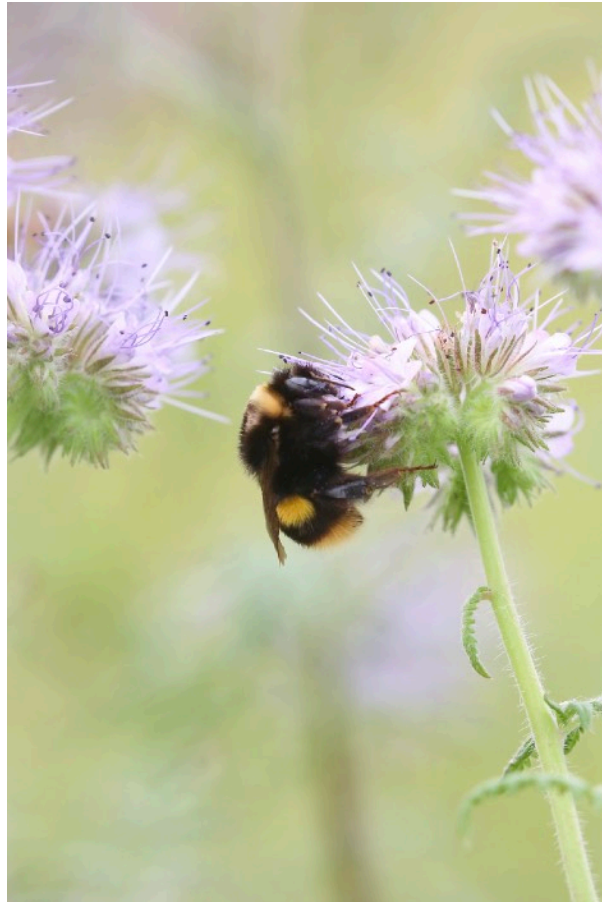


The Wildlife of Lofts Farm 2023

*by Simon Wood**

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This Report covers the year 1st January to 31st December 2023.

Habitat works and back ground

From a naturalists' perspective it has been encouraging to see the work of transforming the farm into a wildlife friendly site. Whilst planting of both the Paddocks and along some hedge lines has taken place it has been equally encouraging to see what has not been done, and specifically the way that hedgerows, having not been cut for several years, are now really beginning to thicken up and, this autumn, have been full of seeds and berries and hence birds. In addition the belts of wildflowers at field hedges have attracted a multitude of pollen-feeding/collecting insects, with bumblebees seen nectaring into December this year.

The number of fishermen using both lakes remained relatively constant throughout the year. A low-key electric fence was erected around part of Carp Lake which we understand is to ensure Otter do not enter the Lake.

Building work in the farm buildings from late summer undoubtedly caused disturbance but shooting no longer takes place over Trout Lake.

Both Carp and Trout Lakes were exceptionally quiet during the last three months of the year. It is unclear why this was but the water in both was exceptionally clear with very little weed, something which some ducks, Coot etc rely on for food.

In contrast to 2022, it was a very wet year, particularly the latter half with over 650mm recorded in a nearby garden, well above the long-term average. It was also warm, but not as warm as 2022. Water levels began the year low but by winter 2023, the levels in the lakes, ponds and ditches were at their highest for some years.

In all a total of 88 full morning visits were made by Malcolm Corbett, Graham Barber and Simon Wood with the numbers of visits made in each month being (2022 visits in brackets) -

January 5 (4); February 5 (7); March 10 (9); April 10 (10); May 7 (6); June 8 (8); July 8 (7); August 9 (4); September 5 (8); October 7 (5); November 9 (5); December 5 (6). Thus eight months saw more visits than in 2022 but three (February, September and December) saw less whilst one (June) saw the same number.

In addition, the three above mentioned observers made other shorter visit and John Buchanan also visited occasionally.

BIRDS

A total of 110 species was recorded in 2023, the same as 2022 (NB the 2022 Report incorrectly states 109).

Species observed in 2022 but not 2023 were - American Wigeon, Arctic Tern, Brambling, Garden Warbler, Golden Plover, Red-crested Pochard, Wheatear, Whinchat, White Stork. Species observed in 2023 but not 2022 were - Little Ringed Plover, Osprey, Pintail, Raven, Redshank, Ring Ouzel, Stonechat, Turtle Dove, Woodcock.

Where I have presented graphs showing the annual monthly distribution of records, I have tried to eliminate the bias caused by variation in frequency of visits by using simple statistics. This has been done by calculating an 'average count per visit' by dividing the sum of all birds seen in a month by the number of visits made in that month, as per

previous years. Thus, if in August Green Woodpecker was seen on four dates and the number of birds on each date was three, two, two and three, then these would be totalled to give ten. If the number of visits to the site made in August was five, then dividing the total of ten by five gives an 'average' of two. I have, for consistency, used only data from those visits by Malcolm, Graham and myself that took place in the morning and involved a full walk round. Thus, an afternoon visit to, for example, check for any roosting egrets, would not be included in this calculation. If any of us were on site at the same time and both submitted a list, the highest count of each species across the lists was used and the two visits counted as a single visit.

All survey records were submitted into the Essex Birdwatching Society's database, from which this section was compiled. The systematic list, names and order are based on the last BOURC British List 10th Edition 2022 (with updates dated December 2023). 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.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

Common, naturalised, resident.

Four broods were noted in late June, although their success is uncertain. Otherwise, numbers outside the breeding season were up from 2022 but counts of over 30 were noted just four times with the highest being 60 that flew over and may have dropped onto Carp Lake on 25th October.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* **A**

Common, naturalised, resident.

Six-seven pairs probably bred, a slight increase on 2022.

In the first part of the year, the highest count was 80 that flew over on 7th March, whilst in the later half, the only three figure count was 200 on 1st August. Numbers in the second winter period were particularly low.

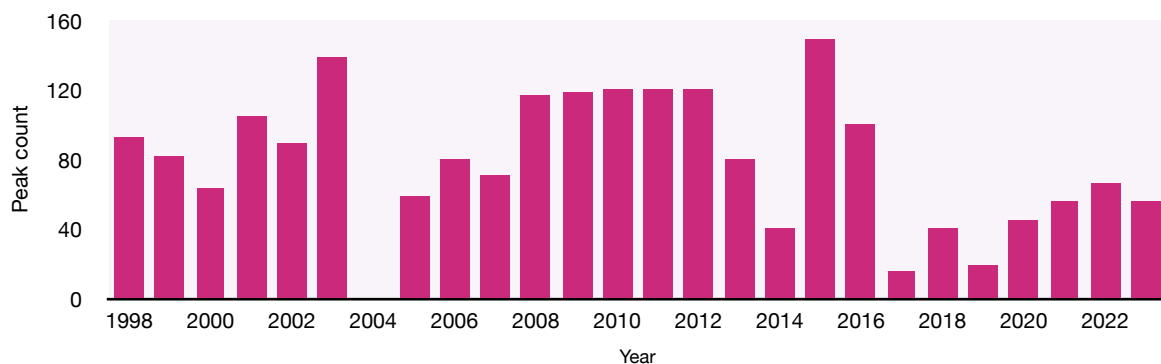
Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

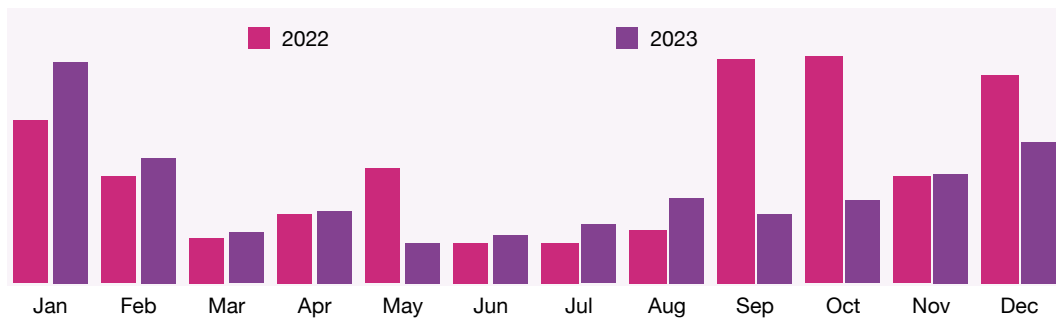
Two pairs bred raising seven young, one pair on Carp Lake and one on Trout Lake, similar to last year. A further pair built a nest on Silt Lake but did not breed.

Outside the breeding season, the first winter saw a peak of 55 on 11th January (66 on 22nd September in 2022) with numbers steadily declining thereafter, although there were 35 on 5th April. Numbers in the second winter were low with 35 on 23rd November the highest count. With the H5N1 bird flu virus still widespread it is unclear if this is affecting populations of this and other birds; three dead birds were found in March. However, numbers were lower this year than last.

Peak annual counts of Mute Swan 1998-2023



Mute Swan - relative monthly abundance in 2022 and 2023



Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Common, naturalised, resident.

Again, no sign of breeding and for most months numbers were in single figures. Double-figure counts occurred in January, October and November, with the peak count being 32 on 25th October (joint highest site count).

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* A

Late winter/spring visitor; has bred.

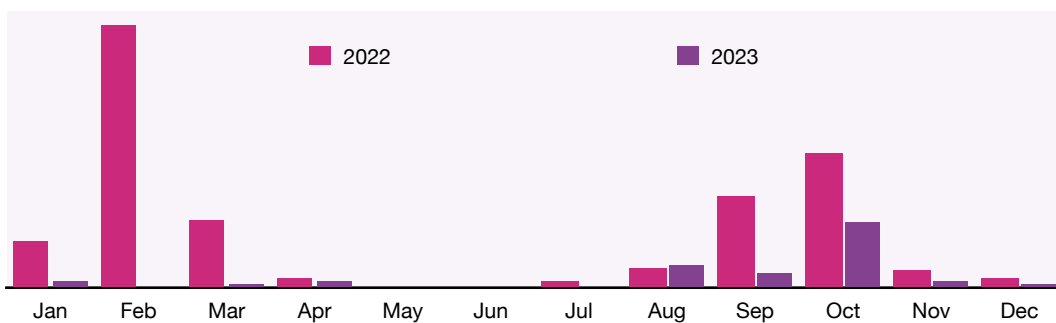
Just seven records (same as 2022) during March to June, with five birds on the farm buildings on 13th June the highest count and the only one suggestive of breeding behaviour. A fairly typical year.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* A

Passage migrant and winter visitor. Has summered.

Recorded in all months apart from February and June with no signs of breeding. Numbers always in single figures with eight on 29th August and 25th October the highest counts. Less numerous than 2022.

Northern Shoveler - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023

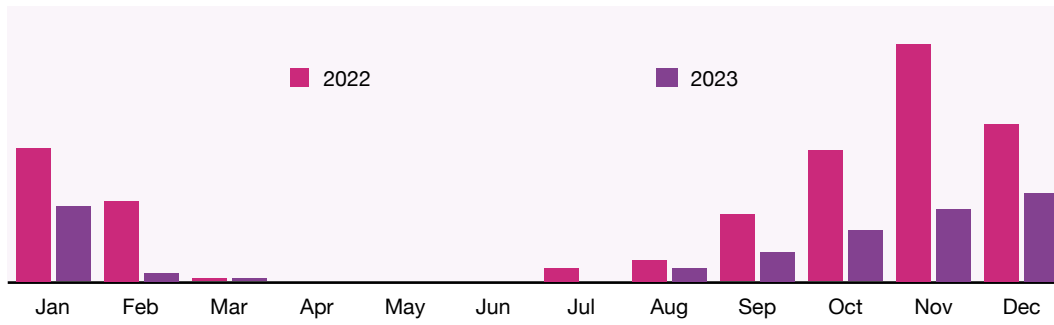


Gadwall *Mareca strepara* A

Fairly common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

There were no signs of breeding with just single records in May and June and none in July with single figure counts between February and July. Peak counts were at either end of the year with 30 present on both 11th January and 7th December. Numbers lower than in 2022.

Gadwall - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023

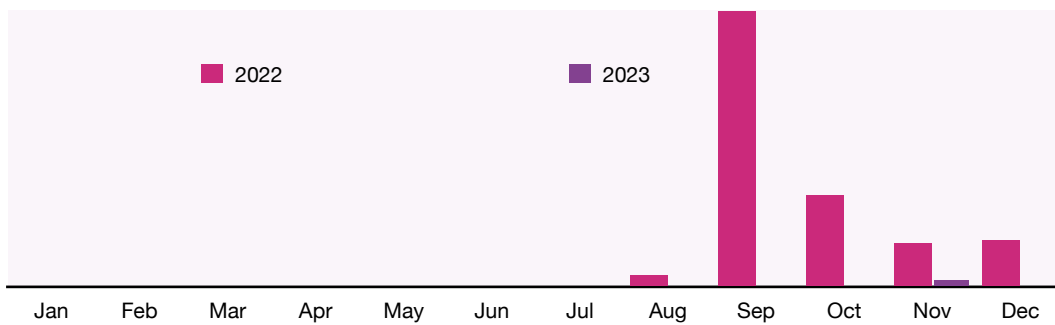


Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope* A

Passage migrant.

Just four records, a female on the early date of 3rd August and then three November records of a male and a female. A poor year.

Wigeon - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



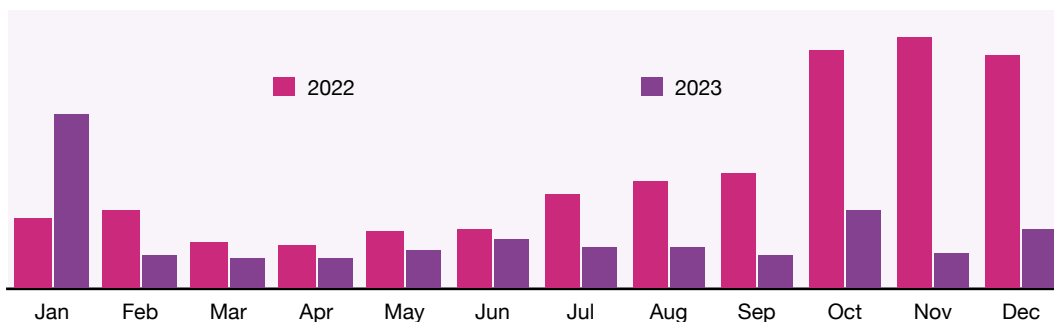
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* A

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor

Around 7-10 pairs were noted, a similar number to 2022.

The first winter period saw a peak count of 109 on 3rd January, following on from the high numbers present at the end of 2022 with numbers much decreased after the end of the month.

Mallard - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Second winter numbers were lower than the same period last year with a peak of 40 on 25th October 2023.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* A

Former regular visitor, now rare.

After a blank year last year, a very early female was present briefly on Carp Lake on 22nd August. This is the earliest autumn arrival by three days (previously 25th August 2016).

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* A

Passage migrant.

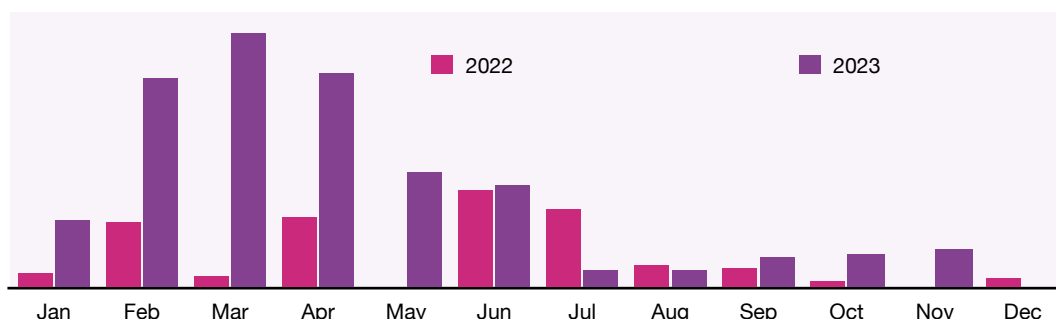
Just four records in 2023 (13 in 2022) with two records in January, including four on 3rd, and single records in October and December.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* R

Much declined passage migrant and winter visitor.

Recorded in every month of the year but with no evidence of breeding. Up to 11 birds were present during late May with 17 noted on 27th June. Otherwise, double figure counts were recorded regularly from January to April with a peak of 40 on 6th April. In the latter half of the year, numbers were in single figures, apart from 12 on 9th November. More numerous than in 2022.

Pochard - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Tufted Duck *Aythya fuliga*

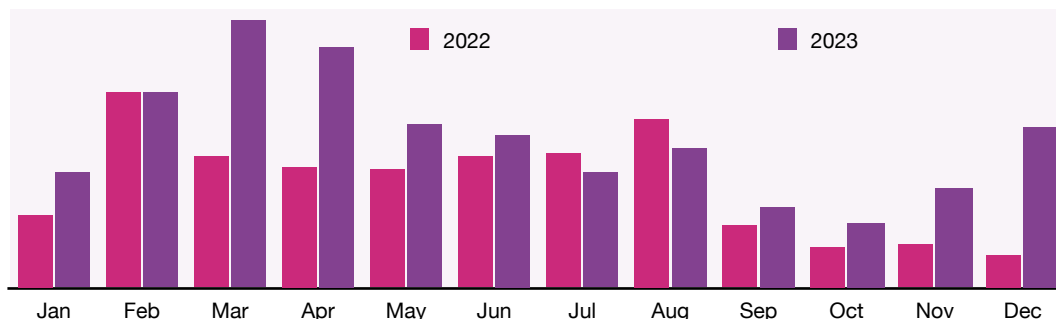
Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Six-seven pairs bred, a similar number to 2022.

Non-breeding birds were present in similar numbers to last year with monthly peaks of 63 on 13th April, 51 on 18th May, 58 on 22nd June and 35 on 4th July whilst late summer saw a peak of 44 on 8th August.

During the first winter period, the highest counts were 63 on 11th January and 23rd February and 70 on 27th March. Second-winter numbers were larger than in 2022 with a peak of 60 on 17th November. Seemingly more numerous than in 2022.

Tufted Duck - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Common Merganser (Goosander) *Mergus merganser*

Ten records involving 18 birds.

A run of six records from 2nd March to 19th April, presumed to all relate to the same birds, with a peak of nine on 7th March and two on the 19th April.

Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*

Common naturalised resident. Many released birds.

Present all year, mostly 1-3 birds, but large local releases in the autumn saw counts of 23 on 17th October, 50 on 17th November and 30 on 28th November. Releases of game birds in a bird flu epidemic seems at best naive and at worst negligent.

Pheasants have an omnivorous diet and may be having a negative impact on amphibians, reptiles and insects as well as maintaining unusually high populations of avian predators such as crows, although the lack of data due to there being no legal requirement to accurately record game bird releases hampers research.

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Naturalised resident with numbers boosted by released birds.

Much less common than the above species and seemingly not released locally in 2023. Recorded in eight months during the year with nearly a third of records occurring in March with the peak count of the year being five on 2nd March.

Common Swift *Apus apus* R

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.

Extreme dates - 27th April and 16th July (27th April and 25th August in 2022).

Just 17 records during the year, but numbers were higher than in 2022 with nine double-figure and one three-figure count, the largest of which were a total of 150 (in small flocks) on 4th July, 80 on 6th June and 50 on 30th May, most of which are likely to have been migrants or wanderers from outside the area.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* R

Fairly common summer visitor and passage migrant.

Extreme dates - 19th April and 8th August (25th April and 28th June in 2022).

Breeding was confirmed when a juvenile being fed by Reed Warbler was noted in the north-west corner of Trout Lake on 8th August, this being the latest site record by some six weeks.

Apart from three on 9th May, all of the 16 records were of 1-2 birds.

Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*

Common year round visitor.

A common fly-over and occasional visitor in flocks of up to 120 (25th October). Most are en-route to the adjacent Slough House Farm buildings and feed around the buildings and adjacent fields.

Stock Dove *Columba oenas* A

Uncommon resident, perhaps increasing.

Breeding was not confirmed this year but birds were once again noted around the farm buildings, and also in a old standing oak at the top of Fruit Field. Outside the breeding season, recorded in all months apart from February, with only one double-figure count, ten on Lake Field on 3rd January.

Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* A

Abundant resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Once again, breeding was not confirmed although young birds were seen around Lofts throughout the year, so probably took place.

Three figure counts came from late February, March and April and then October and November suggestive of migration through Lofts. The largest count came on 11th November when flocks totalling 340 flew west, the highest site count to date, whilst 260 on 16th October included 150 feeding in Lake Field.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common resident.

Although up to five birds were seen around the farm buildings in the breeding season, there were no signs of breeding.

Outside the breeding season, numbers were small with six on Home Field on 31st October the largest count of the year, with birds not attracted to the Turtle Dove supplementary feeding like they were last year.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* R

Former breeder, now very rare summer visitor.

A single bird visited the supplementary feeding twice on 1st June before appearing to fly off towards Slough House Farm.

Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*

Scarce winter visitor.

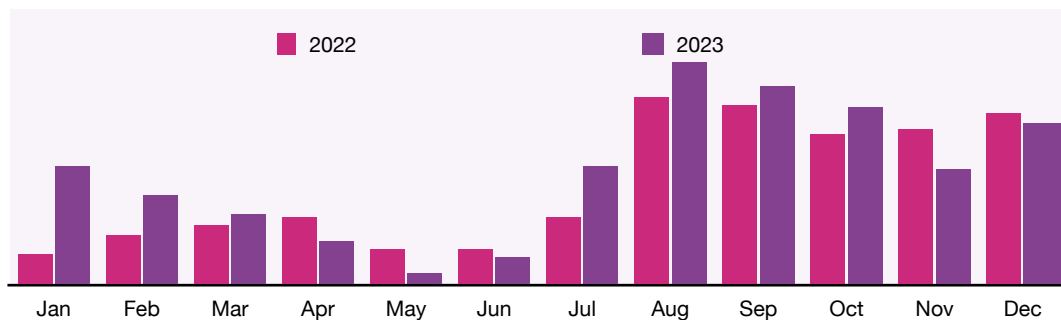
Another five records (two in January and one in March, two in November), presumably involving single birds at either end of the year.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* A

Common resident, possible passage migrant and winter visitor.

Careful observation tends to back up last year's comment that breeding numbers were likely

Common Moorhen - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



under-estimated. Of the order of 7-10 broods were noted during the breeding season. During the first winter, there were eight double-figure counts (three in January, three in February and two in March) with a peak of 20 on 24th January. At the other end of the year, numbers increased quickly from mid July (counts did not include larger young until early August) when 25 were present on 12th. Thereafter, numbers built to a peak of 41 on 14th September, the largest site count to date, then slowly declined, although 26 were still present on 6th December.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

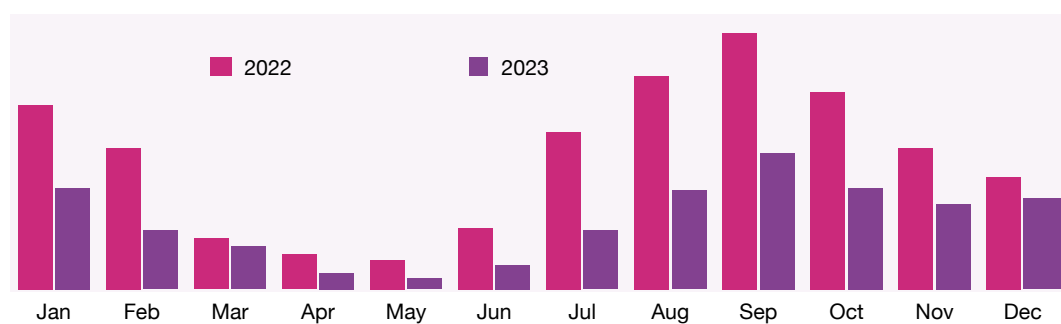
In contrast to 2022, an apparently poor year all round.

There were fewer breeding pairs than last year with perhaps no more than five broods observed (11-15 in 2022).

Numbers outside the breeding season were also substantially down. After three three-figure counts in January (peak 133 on 11th - in 2022 the peak was 212 on 27th), numbers declined steadily and though numbers increased steadily through late summer, presumably as young birds and migrants arrived, the peak count was just 198 on 14th September (316 on 26th September 2022) after which numbers declined and remained at around 100 until the year's end (177 were present on 16th November 2022).

Reasons for the differences are unclear. Although Bird Flu is prevalent, no dead Coot were noted around the Lakes so perhaps another factor is at play? The water in both lakes was exceptionally

Eurasian Coot - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



clear and lacking any weed for long periods during the year. Given Coot largely feed on vegetation perhaps there was less of their food source present this year.

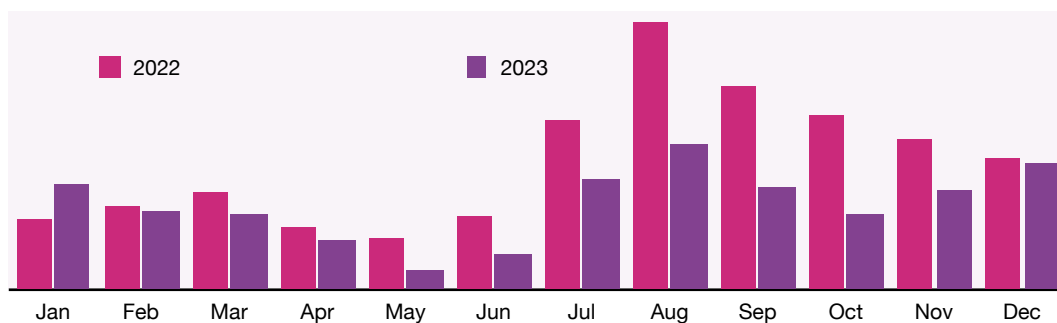
Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Common resident.

About 3-5 pairs bred, broadly the same as last year.

Outside the breeding season numbers were lower than in 2022 with a peak of 16 on both 29th August and 23rd November (28 on 9th August 2022) and peaks of 9-16 in September to December (17-19 in the same period in 2022).

Little Grebe - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



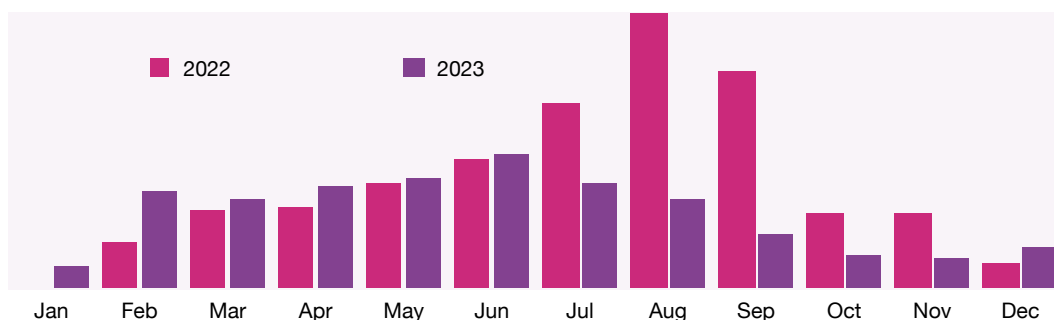
Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Common resident.

Three, possibly four pairs bred, similar to 2022.

As with other water birds, numbers were reduced outside the breeding season, compared to last year. Early in the year, 11 were present on 27th February but numbers did not reach double-figures again until late May to mid June when there were counts of 11-12, after which numbers remained in singles figures with no more than five present during the last four months of the year (peak in 2022 was 22 on 30th August/1st September).

Great Crested Grebe - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* A

Formerly bred. Occasional visitor.

One flew over Trout Lake on 6th April and three flew over and possibly dropped into Carp Lake on 1st June.

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* R

Common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Recorded in the first two and last two months of the year.

In the first winter the highest count was 120+ on Barn Field on 24th January whilst the second winter saw 125, mostly in one mobile flock on Barn Field, on 6th December.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Former summer visitor, probably bred.

Two (a pair?) flew west, calling, over Trout Lake on 5th April, a typical date.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* R

Uncommon, predominantly winter visitor.

A single bird was noted on and off on West Meadow between 3rd January and 7th March whilst a single bird flew north calling on 20th July.

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* R

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Two records in February (21st and 23rd) were thought to relate to the same bird but another two in March (21st and 27th) were most likely different birds. The March records are the latest records for the site.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* A

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

A similar number of records to last year but all involving singles apart from two on 27th February. The five records were in: January (one); February (two), March (two). It is possible that some of the records refer to the same long-staying bird.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* A

Uncommon passage migrant; declining.

Just two August records of singles, on Trout Lake on 4th and Carp Lake on 22nd.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ocherous* A

Almost annual passage migrant and winter visitor.

Two flying east over the southern side of Carp Lake on 11th November was the sole record.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* A

Two records.

One flew over calling on 8th August, just the second site record.

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* A

Common, year round visitor. Has bred.

There was no evidence of breeding.

Five three-figure counts were noted in March (c.f. 2022) and one in October but the highest was only 170 on 23rd March, far lower than last year's peak of 300 on 6th January 2022. Numbers were perhaps lower due to the effects of Bird Flu on the nearby Heybridge Pits which saw the large breeding colony completely abandoned as the virus took hold.

Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus* A

Late winter and summer visitor in very small numbers.

Six records compared to two in 2022, all falling between 27th March and 26th April, with up to four birds (19th April) involved (a record site count). Presumably all records refer to the same wandering birds usually present nearby at Heybridge Pit during spring.

Mew (Common) Gull *Larus canus* A

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

Recorded in all months apart from June and July with extreme dates being 4th May (single bird) and 4th August when seven were present, a single adult on Trout Lake plus fly overs. Apart from ten on 7th March, all records were of single figures.

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

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

Apart from two adults on 3rd January, all subsequent records were of single adults from January to March and from 22nd August to 17th October and it is tempting to suggest the same returning bird is responsible for all records.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* **R**

Common year round visitor. Possibly bred in 2019.

No evidence again of breeding.

Recorded in every month of the year with double-figure counts in February (one), April (three), August (one), October (one) and December (one) and the largest count being 25 on 25th October, with 16 on 27th April. Numbers generally lower than in 2022.

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

Common year round visitor.

Recorded in all months bar December and in smaller numbers than Herring Gull, and generally being scarce during the winter months. The largest count was 11 on 10th August.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* **A**

Common summer visitor. Formerly bred.

The first birds of the year were three on 26th April, with two on 22nd August the last birds of the year. All counts were of 1-3 birds apart from four on 1st May and 28th June, with numbers marginally lower than in 2022.

Despite birds being seen all summer, there was no evidence of breeding.

A bird seen on 13th April may have been this species or Arctic Tern.

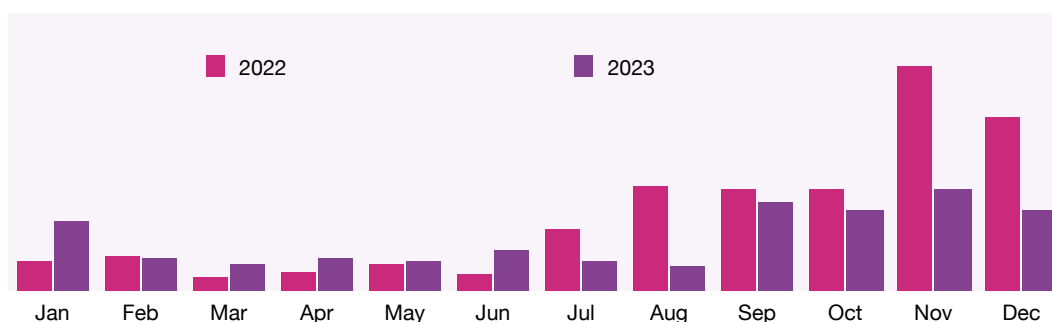
Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Common visitor all year. Formerly bred.

Although recorded in all months of the year, there was no evidence of breeding.

Double-figure counts were noted in January and from September to December with numbers generally lower than in 2022. Numbers were generally greatest from September to November with the highest counts being 28 on 24th September and 19 on 22nd November although 27 of the former were birds flying over. Reduced numbers during the second half of the year compared to 2022.

Great Cormorant - relative monthly abundance in 2022-23



Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Common year round visitor.

Recorded in every month of the year with all records in single figures with the highest count being seven on 18th May and 13th and 15th June.

Great Egret *Egret alba* A

Twelve records of 11 birds.

A single bird flew north-east on 27th March and another bird was presumed to be responsible for four records during November, the latest on 28th November.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Common year round visitor.

Seen in all months of the year apart from February with numbers highest from late summer to late autumn and fewest present in the winter months. The only double-figure counts were ten on both 18th July and 31st October.

The evening roost on Carp Lake was not checked this year.

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* A

Five records.

One flew high over Trout Lake, heading west, on 30th May.

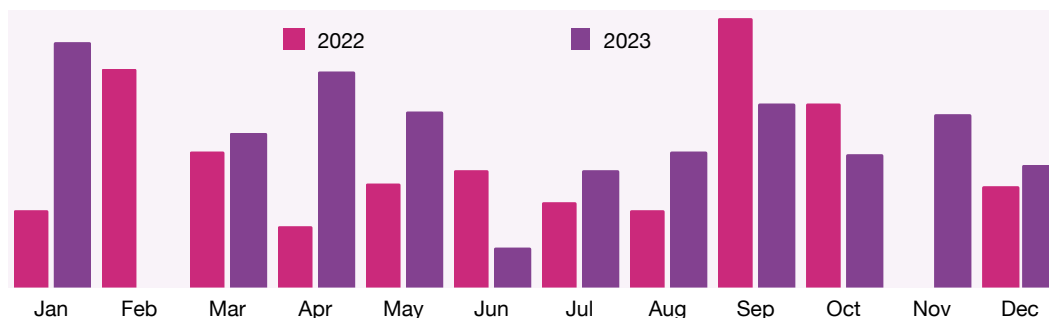
Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* A

Fairly common year round visitor. May breed.

Recorded in all months bar February. There were no confirmed breeding records, although a female carrying food was noted on 4th August.

All records were of 1-2 birds apart from four on 27th March, a time when birds are displaying.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk - relative monthly abundance in 2022-23



Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* A

Scarce year-round visitor.

Another four records (in March, April, May and September) this year takes the total to 16 records with a distinctive spring and autumn bias: February (one); March (two); April (three); May (four); September (two); October (four).

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Increasing passage migrant; now resident nearby.

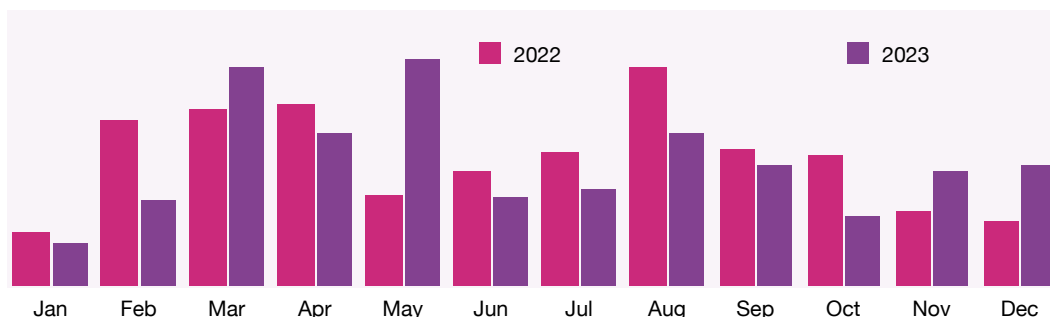
Eleven records this year compared to 15 last year with reports in: March (two); April (three); May (two); June (one); July (one); October (one); December (one). Most records were of single birds but there were six on 6th April, four on 17th April and three on 4th May.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Now common year round resident. Confirmed breeding in 2020.

A pair was present around the fields all year and seen to be carrying prey in late May and early June with a juvenile joining them from early July. It is believed at least one pair nested in South Wood. Outside the breeding season counts of ten on 15th March and 12 on 27th March included birds kettling over Wickham Bishops and then drifting south. Outside the spring period there were counts of 1-4 birds.

Common Buzzard - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

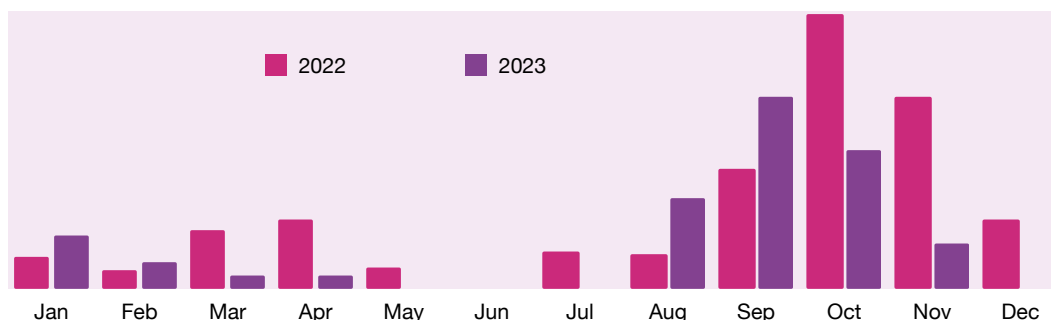
Scarce year round resident. Breeds in farm buildings occasionally.

The usual pair bred in the farm buildings.

Only four sightings by the usual observers, but with Edwina now on site, regular sightings were noted around the farm yard area.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

Common Kingfisher - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Resident.

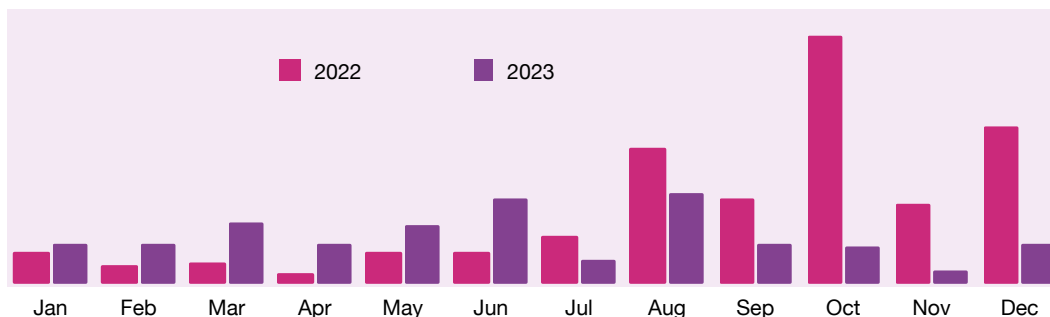
Unlike 2022 there were no records between 5th April and 4th August. Most records were singles but during September/October, two were recorded regularly with three present on 5th October.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*

Resident.

Birds were recorded in every month, but there were no signs of breeding, despite a good number

Great Spotted Woodpecker - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



of records in the breeding season.

All records were of 1-2 birds apart from three on 9th May and four on 1st June. Less obvious in the second half of the year than in 2022.

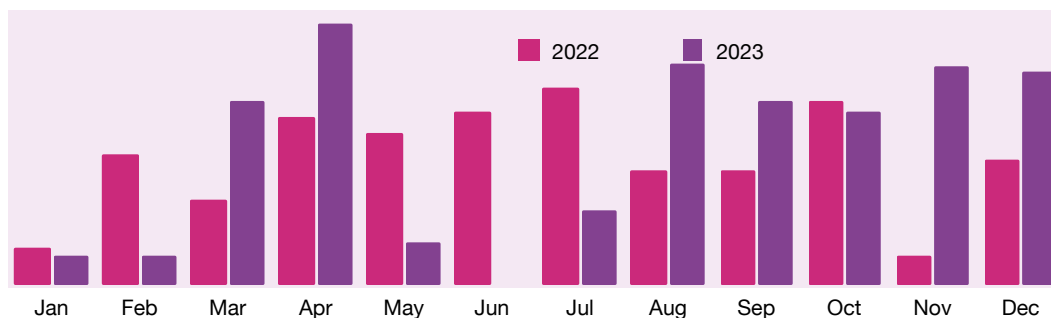
Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*

Resident.

Recorded in every month apart from June, with no evidence of breeding.

Birds were recorded throughout the year with 1-2 recorded regularly with three noted on seven occasions: April (three); August (two); October (one); November (two).

Green Woodpecker - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

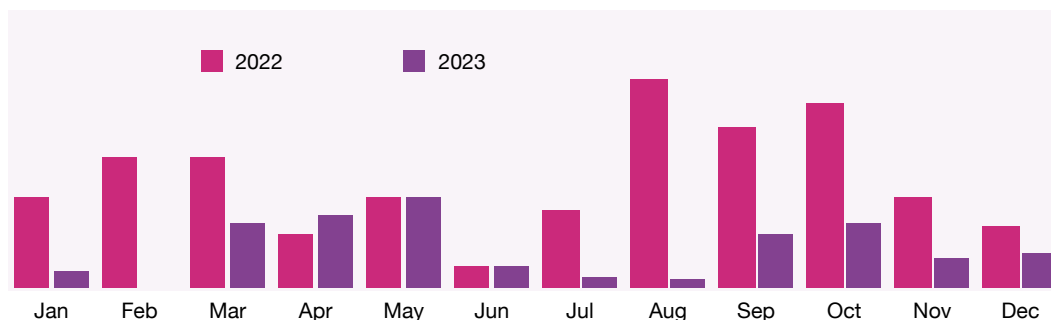
A

Resident.

Noted in all months, apart from February and no signs of breeding.

All records were of 1-2 birds. Less common than in 2022.

Common Kestrel - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Principally summer migrant. May have bred?

Six records, one in May, three in July and two in August, a similar number to 2022. Records in July and early August may point to a bird(s) resident nearby, rather than migrants.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Thirteen records of 14 birds.

A single record of one, possibly a male, that flew west over Carp Lake, on 19th April.

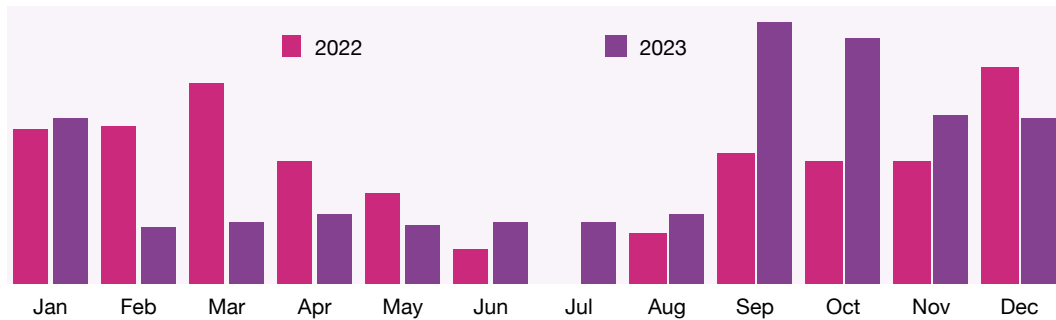
Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Fairly common visitor.

Recorded in all months of the year but it remains unclear as to its breeding status.

Most records were of less than five birds, with six being noted on 24th September, 9th November, and 12th December. After a quieter first half to the year, numbers increased in the autumn, compared to 2022.

Eurasian Jay - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*

Common resident.

Present all year, and although birds were seen carrying nest material breeding was not confirmed although it is assumed to take place.

Double-figure counts were noted in all months apart from January, February and August. The largest counts were 16 on 13th June, 17th October and 15th December.

Western Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*

Common and increased resident.

One-two pairs bred in the Ash trees along the Scraley Road boundary and likely at other locations, but was not proven.

There was just three count of 50+ - about 100 in Barn Field on 7th December whilst there were 50 on 3rd January and 6th December.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* A

Year round visitor.

Surprisingly scarce around Lofts Farm with just 14 records in all months apart from February, July, August and November. By far the largest count was 120 in Fruit Field on 31st October, with the next highest count being 25 in West Meadow on 17th October.

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Common resident and perhaps passage migrant.

Occupied nests were noted on Carp Lake island and along the Scraley Road boundary.

Double-figure counts were noted in all months of the year, apart from February. The largest count of the year was 80 on 7th December with 40 on 5th October. Numbers appeared lower than in 2022.

Northern Raven *Corvus corax*

Two records of one bird

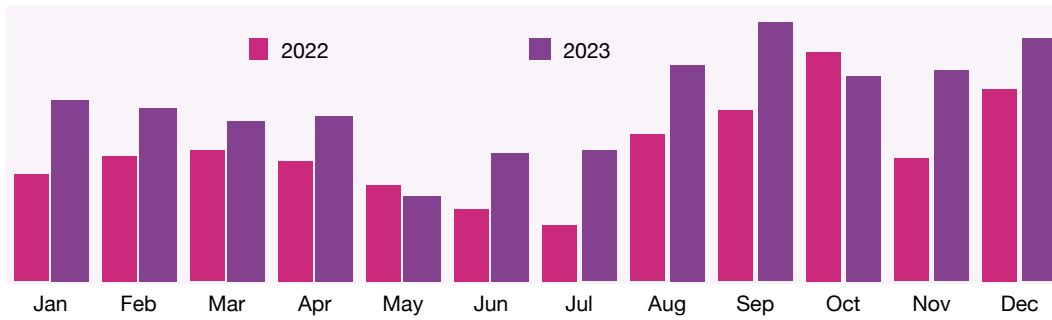
The first records for Lofts were of what was presumed to be the same bird on 29th September and 9th October. It was also heard to the north of the site in between these sightings and is assumed to have taken up short term resident in South Wood.

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Common resident and perhaps passage migrant.

Approximately 12 pairs were noted in various locations and young birds being fed were noted too. Numbers remained fairly constant throughout the year with higher numbers from late August through to the end of the year. Peak counts were 29 on 28th September and 12th October. Numbers appeared to have been higher than in 2022.

Eurasian Blue Tit - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



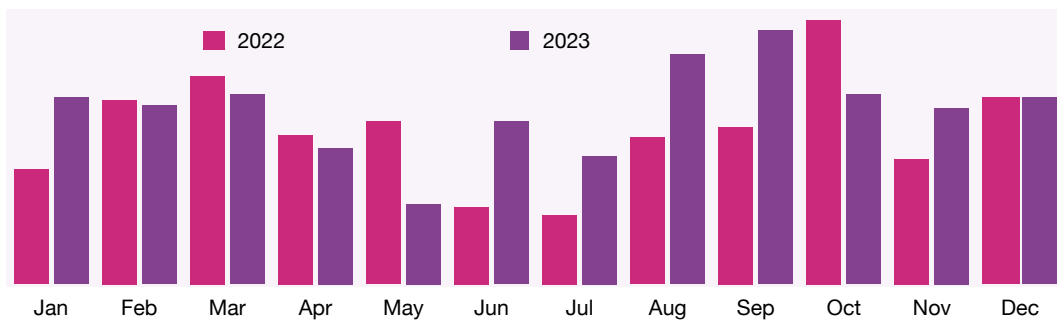
Great Tit *Parus major*

Common resident.

At least six singing males were noted across the site, which is likely a significant under-estimate of the actual number of pairs on site.

Like Blue Tit, numbers were generally highest from August onwards, although the largest count of

Great Tit - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



25 was rather surprisingly on 1st June with the next highest count being 20 on 29th August.

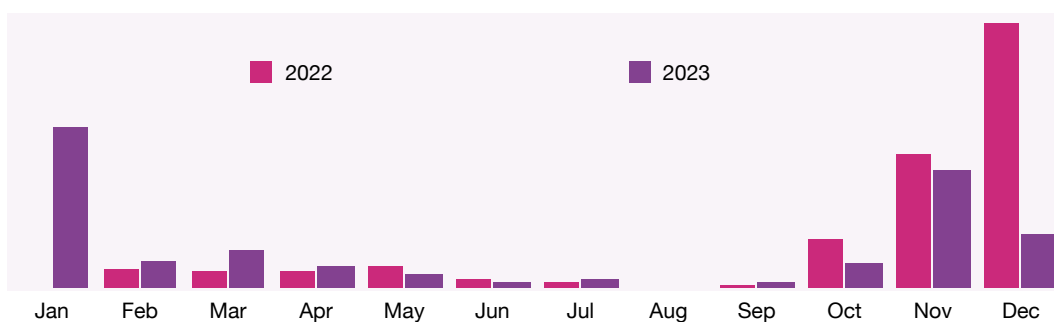
Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* **R**

Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Up to seven singing males were noted, a marginal increase on 2022.

The first winter saw a flock of 110 on 3rd January, this flock being present at the end of 2022. This

Eurasian Skylark - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023

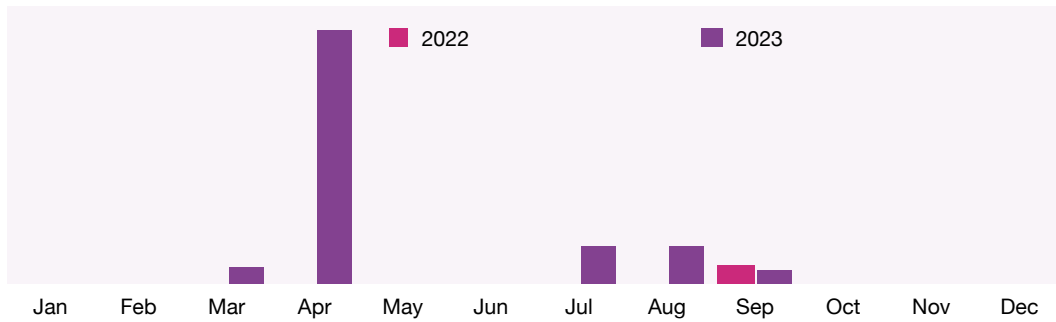


flock declined slowly through February and March. Numbers increased again from mid-October with peaks of 60 on 11th and 22nd November, although this flock dispersed by the year end.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Common passage migrant.

Sand Martin - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



A much better year than 2022 with 19 records, the first involving two birds on 27th March and the latest being two on 28th September. The spring saw ten records, with the last on 1st May and the autumn nine records, the earliest being 12th July when three flew south. The largest counts were 140 on the evening of 10th April and 70 on 13th April.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

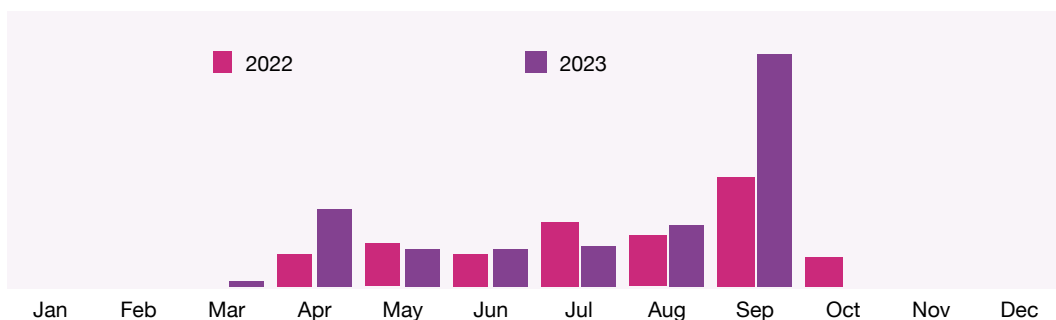
Common summer visitor and passage migrant.

There were no signs of breeding around the farm buildings although a pair did briefly hang around.

The earliest bird was over Trout Lake on 21st March, the earliest arrival for the site, and the latest being six moving south on 29th September.

Counts were general small with the only three-figure one being 100 over on 4th September, with the next highest being 62 on the evening of 10th April.

Barn Swallow - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023

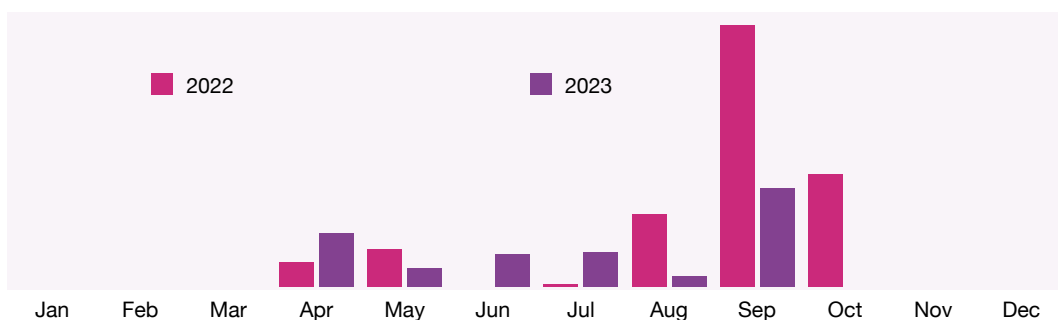


Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum* **R**

Much declined summer visitor, principally a passage migrant.

Two birds were present on 30th March and the latest, a late passage of 70 birds (the largest count of the year) on 24th September. That count aside the highest counts were 50 on 27th April and 40 on 26th, perhaps all the same birds.

Common House Martin - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Slightly more numerous during the summer but fewer passing through in the autumn.

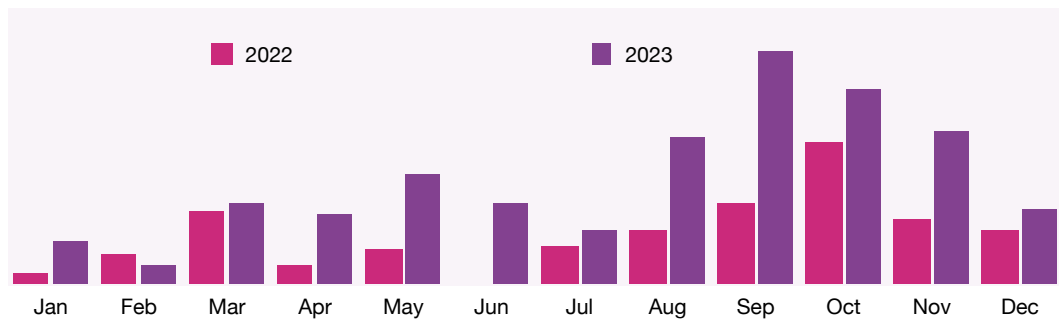
Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Increasing resident.

Unlike in 2022, birds were recorded all year and indeed there appeared to be a strong presence all summer with up to three singing birds from March through to July, perhaps suggestive of breeding although this was not confirmed.

Outside the breeding season numbers were also much greater than in 2022 with up to six birds noted in September and October, five in November and four in August.

Cetti's Warbler - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



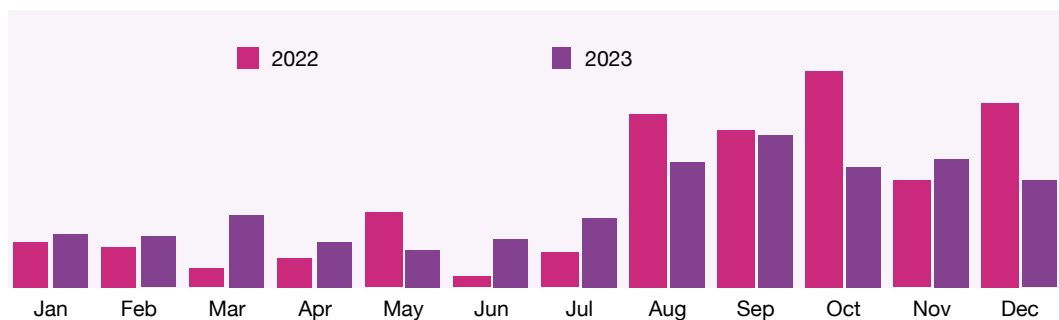
Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Common resident.

At least four pairs were noted, lower than in 2022, but this must be an under-estimate of the total number present.

Small flocks were noted all year with double-figure counts in all months apart from April and May.

Long-tailed Tit - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



The largest counts occurred in late July and August with 36 on 25th July and 40 on 29th and 31st August. There after numbers tailed off with a peak in September of 26, October 25, November 25 and December 20.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* A

Passage migrant, formerly common winter visitor.

A total of ten records, with just one spring record (as in 2022) on 11th April. Autumn records occurred from 4th August when five migrants were present through until 9th October with a late bird, presumably previously seen on 5th October, present. Six were present on 8th August with four two days later and five were noted on 29th August. All other records were of single birds.

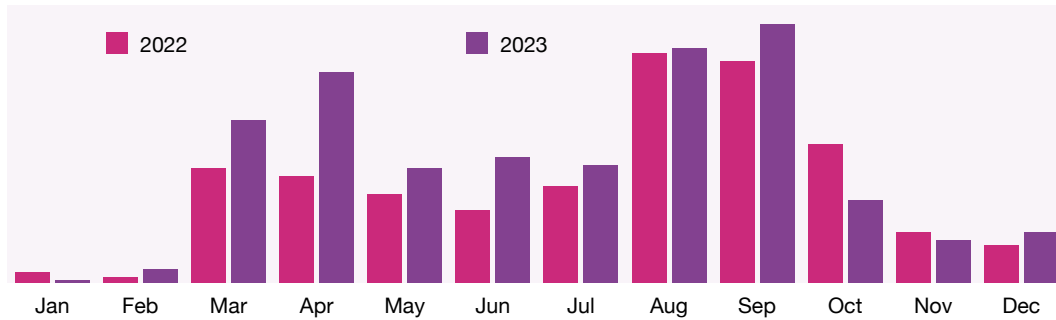
Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Occasional in winter.

Spring passage was evident from mid-March with a notable peak of 17 on 20th March, with a further peak around 11th-17th April of 10-11 birds which perhaps involve local birds on territory.

Birds were noted in all months of the year with, in the first winter 1-2 birds present. Numbers increased from mid August, perhaps as local birds dispersed, with 18 noted on 31st. The largest count of the year was at least 20 on 28th September, with 14 noted on 5th October, the last

Common Chiffchaff - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



double-figure count of the year. The second winter period saw up to four birds present in both November and December.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* A

Summer visitor.

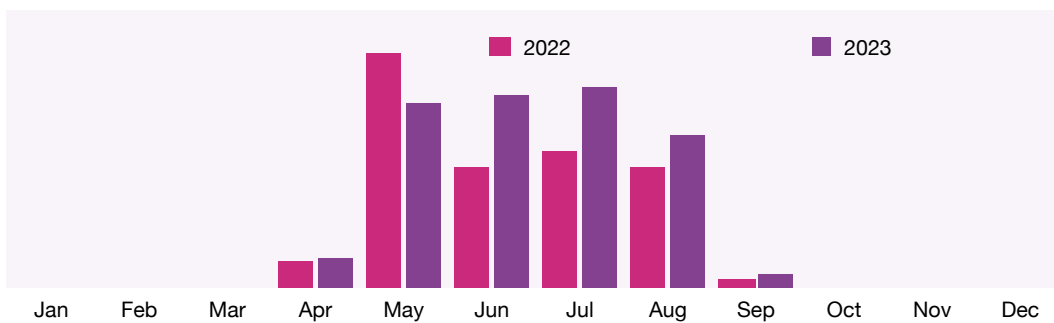
Just two records, of single birds on 20th July and 10th August.

Eurasian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Summer visitor and passage migrant.

Around 12 singing males/pairs were noted on 9th May, maintaining the numbers seen in 2022 (13).

Eurasian Reed Warbler - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



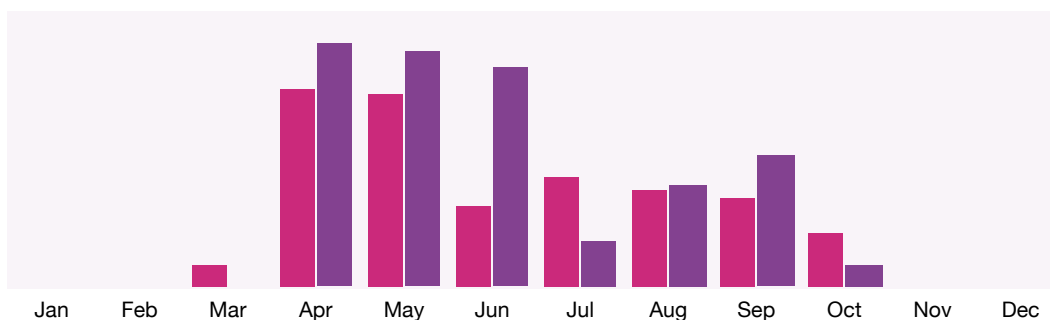
The first bird arrived on 5th April (21st April in 2022), the earliest site record by two weeks, with the last three noted on 4th September (7th September in 2022). Outside the breeding season, double-figure counts were noted on five occasions, once in late June, twice in July and twice in August with the largest count being 20 on 20th July, presumably adults with young birds. Seemingly present in larger numbers than in 2022.

Eurasian Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Increasing summer visitor and passage migrant.

Once again, a summer visitor to the site with the earliest two singing on 2nd April (9th March in 2022) and the latest being noted on 17th October (6th October), the latest site record to date.

Eurasian Blackcap - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Up to seven singing males were noted in June, the same number as in 2022 whilst counts of up to nine birds were noted in the breeding season. There were no double-figure counts outside the breeding season, the highest being five on 28th September.

Lesser Whitethroat *Curruca curruca*

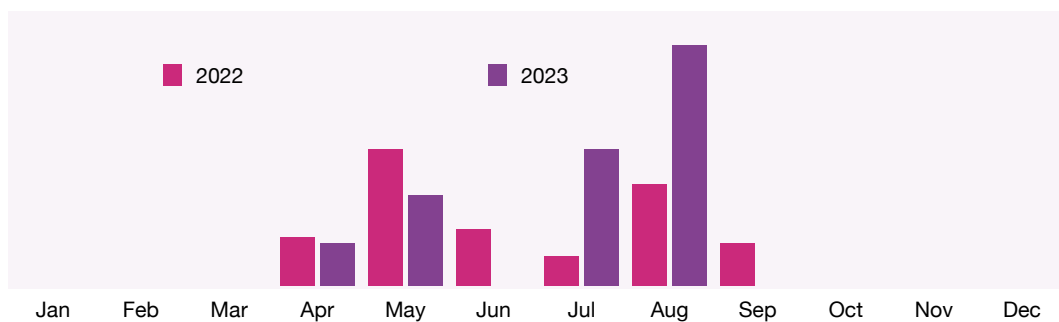
Fairly common summer visitor.

The earliest bird appeared on 19th April (21st April in 2022) whilst the last record was four on 31st August (29th September in 2022).

Up to four singing males were noted during the late April, early May. Surprisingly, there were no records during June so its breeding status this year is unclear.

Outside the breeding season, a count of eleven on 29th July was thought to be made up of a couple of family groups. Otherwise the only other double-figure count was ten on 29th August.

Lesser Whitethroat - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



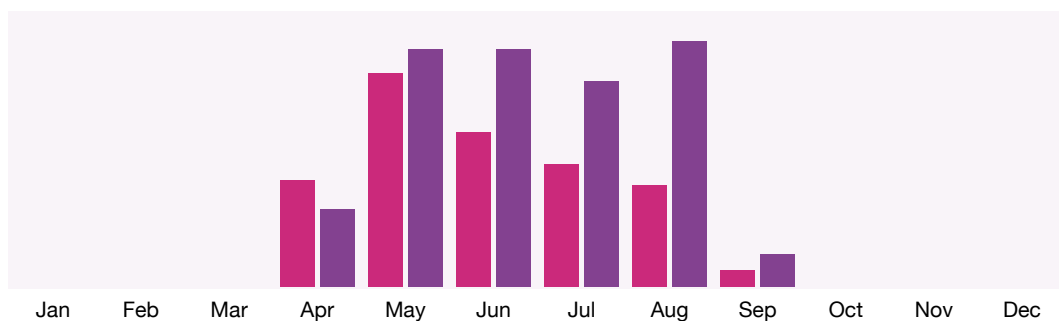
Common Whitethroat *Curruca communis* A

Resident and passage migrant.

A singing male was present on the 14th April (same as 2022), whilst the last three birds were noted on 28th September (8th September in 2022).

Up to eleven singing males were noted on 27th April, when 14 birds were noted on site with birds seen carrying food during the breeding season. Outside the breeding season there were counts of 14 on 15th June (including eight singing males), 18th July and 10th August whilst there were two other double-figure counts, of ten, on 3rd and 8th August.

Whitethroat - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



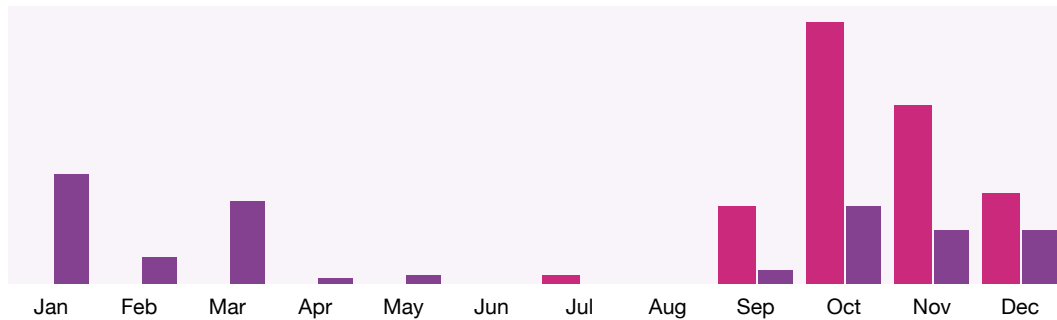
Seemingly larger numbers were present than in 2022.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*

Scarce year round visitor and passage migrant.

Up to three singing males were noted in March but it is unlikely breeding took place.

Goldcrest- relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



A total of twenty records was an increase on the 15 in 2022. Records occurred in each month from January to May and from October to December with peak counts being six on 25th October and four 15th March (including three singing males) and 11th November.

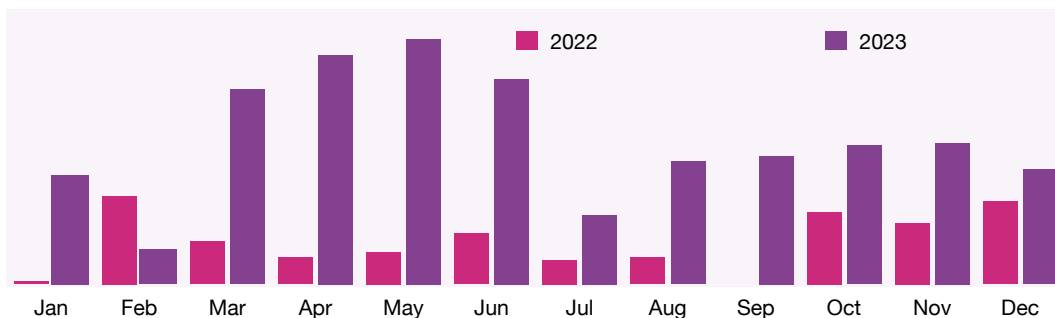
Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* A

Common resident.

Up to 13 singing males were noted during April and May (12 in 2022) with 15 birds present on 1st May and 14 on 15th March and 1st June.

Numbers were generally higher than in 2022 with double-figure counts in six months of the year: March (two); April (six); May (five); June (three); October (two); November (two). Aside from the double-figure counts already mentioned the largest was 13 on 5th April. Seemingly more numerous than in 2022.

Eurasian Wren - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

Two records.

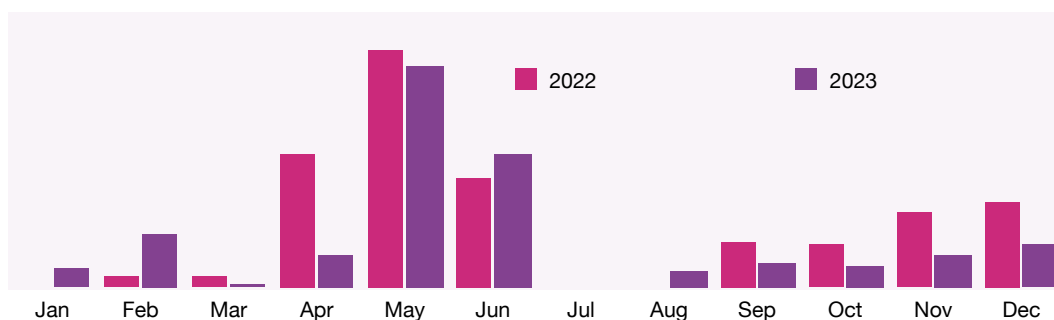
The second record for the site involved one calling from the Scraley Road boundary on 29th July.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* R

Common year round visitor, passage migrant and winter visitor.

There was no clear evidence of breeding on the site.

Common Starling - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Records came from every month of the year but there were no three-figure counts like last year. Apart from 50 on 9th February, the largest flocks occurred during the period April to June, and then again from late September to December. Counts of 50 were reported several times in May and June, almost always feeding flocks that often dropped into the West Meadow. Later in the year, the largest of the double-figure flocks was 27 on 9th November.

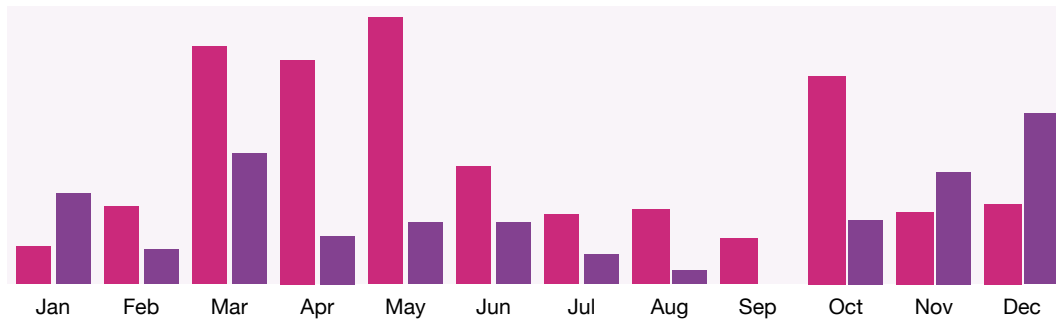
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* A

Uncommon resident. Passage migrant and winter visitor.

Up to three singing males were noted during the breeding season, the same number as in 2022.

There were three double-figure counts: 15 on 7th March, including a flock of ten presumed migrants; 14 on 17th November; ten on 12th December.

Song Thrush - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* R

Very scarce visitor.

Three records, one of two birds on 7th December and two singles, on 28th September and 5th October.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus* A

Winter visitor and passage migrant in small numbers.

During the first winter period, the last record involved three birds on 20th March whilst the first returning birds were a total of 76 flying over on 16th October.

The first winter saw just two double-figure counts, a feeding flock of 80 on 3rd January and 15 on 30th January whilst the latter part of the year saw three double-figure flocks, one of which mentioned above: 11 on 7th and ten on 12th December.

Redwing - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



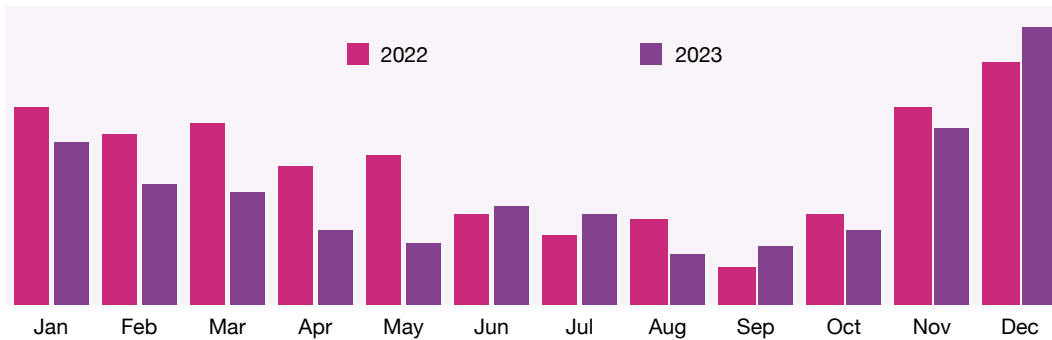
Common Blackbird *Turdus merula*

Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

At least five singing males were noted as well as birds carrying food and nesting material, similar to 2022. This must be a significant under-recording of the true number of Blackbirds across the site.

The species appears to have been more numerous than in 2022 with double-figure counts noted in six months of the year: January (two); March (one); May (one); October (one); November (three); December (four). Peak counts were 17 on 12th December with 15 on both 29th November and 7th December.

Common Blackbird - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* R

One record.

The first record involved a female that was present briefly along the approach track towards the farmhouse on 25th October.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* R

Common passage migrant and winter visitor.

The last record of the first winter period involved 81 drifting over in flocks (max. 50) on 5th April with the first returning birds being 11 flying over on 16th October.

Compared to 2022's meagre three first winter records, there were 12 records in 2023, of which seven were double-figure counts. Apart from the 81 mentioned above, the highest were 40 on 15th March and 35 on 30th January.

In the second winter there were 17 records, of which the largest by some way was at least 250 in the fields on 7th November. Of the other seven double-figure counts, the largest was a single flock of 30 on 28th November.

Fieldfare - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023

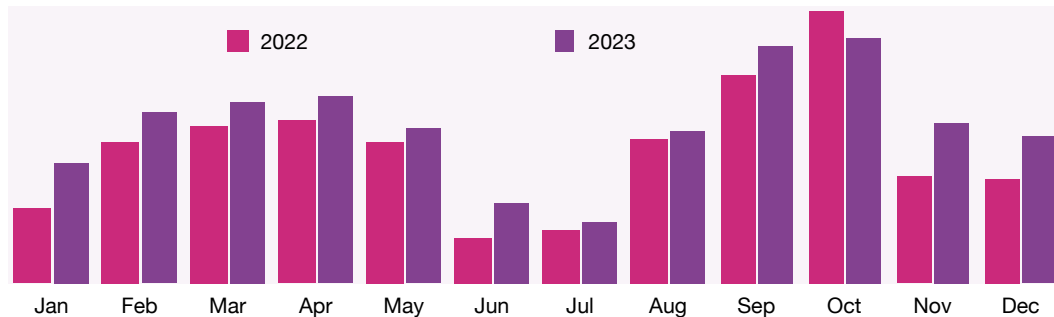


European Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Common resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

A peak of at least 18 singing males was noted on 5th April whilst birds were noted carrying food, passing food to partners and removing faecal sacs from nests.

European Robin - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Outside the breeding season double-figure counts (10-20) were noted regularly whilst there were counts of more than 20 from September to November with the highest being 28 on 16th October and 25 on 28th September.

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* R

Bred 2022 and possibly in 2023. Otherwise very scarce migrant and summer visitor.

The presumed same male returned to last year's breeding area on 13th April. The next day, three birds were present, two of them singing males with a third bird calling from nearby, a scenario repeated on 19th April. Two were heard singing again on 27th April with a single singing male on three dates in May. It is likely that breeding took place again but it could not be confirmed.

European Stonechat *Saxicola rubetra*

Five records involving four birds.

Four records involving three birds: a male on 23rd February; a slightly frosty looking female on 5th and 6th April; a female on 16th October.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* R

Resident?

There were no records that pointed to possible breeding.

Recorded in nine months of the year (January, March to August, and October to November) with just two double-figure counts: 15 in western Lake Field hedge on 15th March and 14 on 4th May.

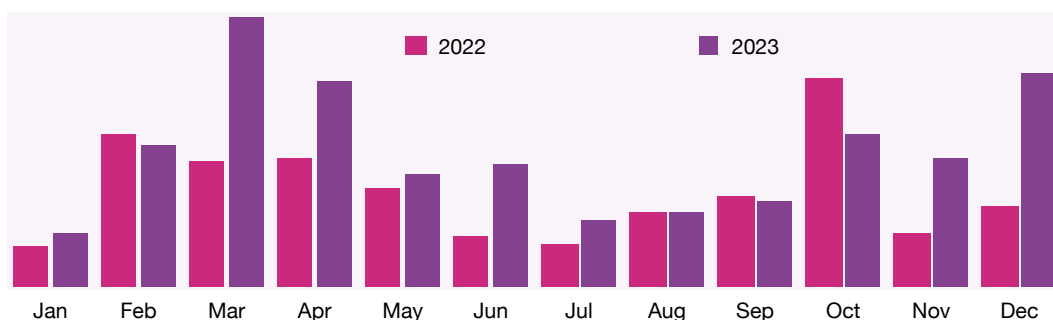
Duncock *Prunella modularis* A

Common resident.

At least 11 singing males were noted in the spring as well as numerous signs of courtship.

Double-figure counts were noted in seven months with the peak counts being 18 on 7th March, and 15 on 15th and 20th March and 12th December.

Duncock - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* R

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

A total of eleven records was a slight increase on 2022 (nine) with three records in April, four in July, three in August and one in September. The first of the year was one by Trout Lake on 5th April (25th April in 2022) with the last being one that flew south calling on 14th September (26th September in 2022).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* A

Annual passage migrant and winter visitor.

A more typical two records, compared to the seven in 2022. One flew south on 14th September with another flying over on 16th October.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

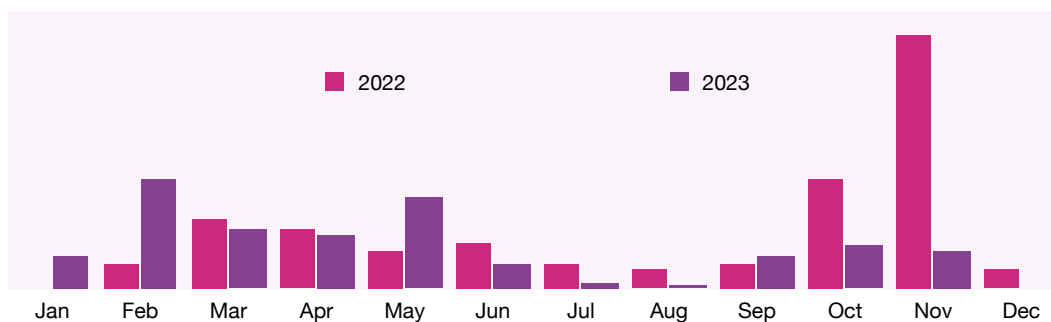
Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarrellii*

Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

There was no evidence of breeding, although a pair did hang around the farm buildings for a while in the spring.

Birds were seen in every month of the year apart from December. By far the majority of the records were of 1-2 birds with the largest counts being five on 20th March, 5th April and 4th May.

Pied Wagtail - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* A

Passage migrant and winter visitor in small numbers.

Recorded in the first winter until 14th April (two) with the first returning bird on 4th August. Double-figure counts were noted in seven months with peak counts being 40 on 3rd November,

Meadow Pipit - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



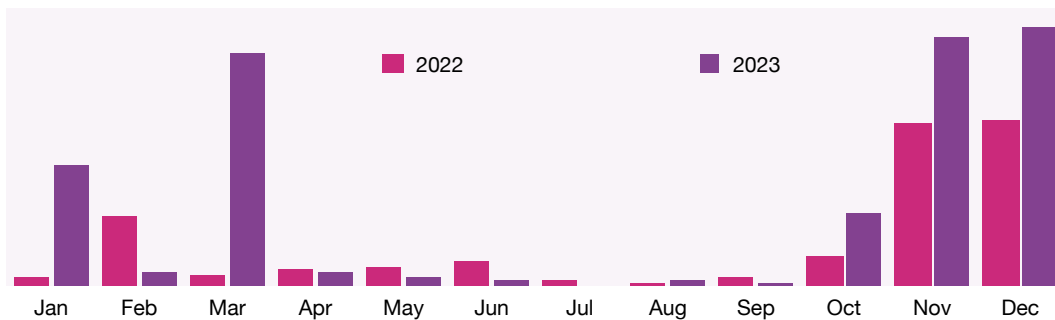
32 on 20th March and 30 on 7th November.

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

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

Just one to two singing males were noted during the spring, a decline on 2022 and suggestive of the wider decline of this species nationally. There were no July records. In the first winter period, numbers were generally low with 25 on 3rd January and 15 on 7th

Common Chaffinch - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



March, until a count of 120 on 20th March, including a migrant flock of 110 in the north-west corner of Barn Field.

Numbers in the second winter period began to increase slowly from mid October with double-figure counts through November and December with peak of 60 on 29th November, 40 on 7th December and 35 on 9th November.

Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* A

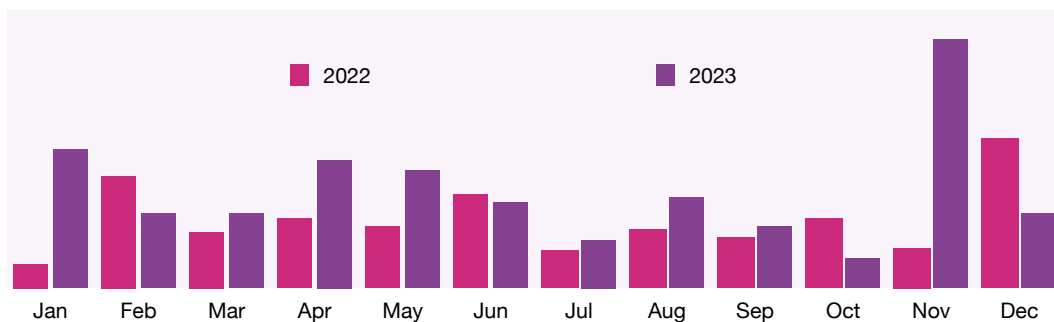
Breeding status uncertain. Otherwise, visitor in very small numbers.

Eight records, compared to nine in 2022 with one in February, three in April, one in August, two in November and one in December. The April and August records all involved probable pairs whilst the latter records in November and December were all of singles.

European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* R

Resident, has decreased.

European Greenfinch - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Five-six singing males were present in the spring.

Recorded in every month of the year with the only double-figure counts coming in late November and presumably involving the same birds: 30 on 28th November; 12 on 29th November. Otherwise, numbers fairly constant through the year.

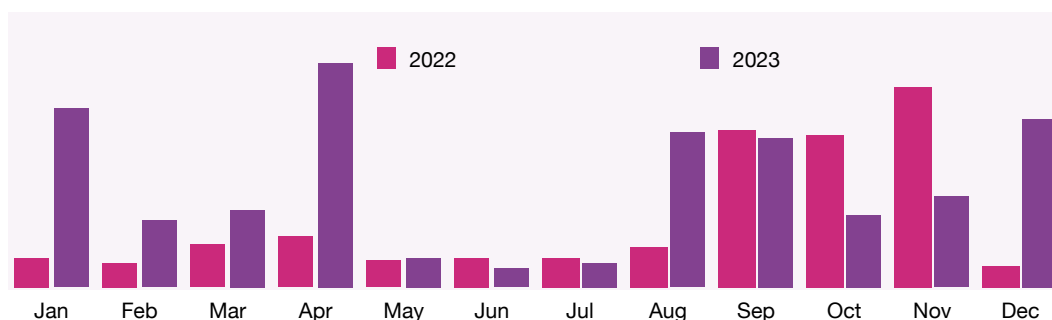
Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina* R

Scarce resident; common passage migrant and winter visitor.

Five-six singing males were present in the spring.

Recorded in every month of the year, albeit just once in January, although this was the largest flock of the year, 130 in a flock in the weed margin to Lake Field on 3rd, the largest site count to date. Double-figure counts were noted from February to April and August to December with the highest counts (aside from the above) being 85 on 19th April and 60 on 6th April whilst the latter period saw 85 on 7th November, 70 on 29th August and 50 on 14th September.

Common Linnet - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret* **R**

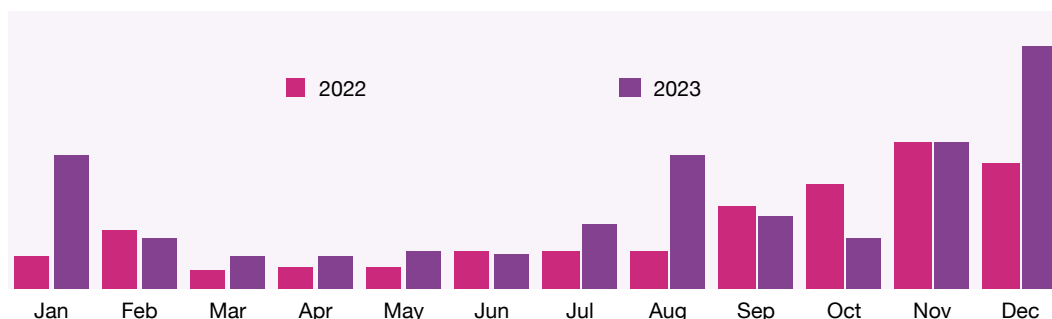
Almost annual passage migrant and winter visitor.

Seven records, one in January, two in October, two in November and two in December with the highest counts being 11 on 12th and 15 on 15th December, presumably both records involving the same birds. A better year than 2022.

European Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

Common, year round resident passage migrant and winter visitor.

European Goldfinch - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



There were no definite breeding records, despite double-figure counts being noted from March - June. This is a surprisingly difficult species to confirm breeding and it is probably under-recorded. Double-figure counts were recorded in every month of the year.

During the first winter period the highest count by some way was 75 on 3rd January, the largest site count to date, which included a single flock of 60. After the breeding season, numbers began to build again from July, a peak count of 41 being noted on 10th August, and 30 on 4th September. Numbers declined during September and October before increasing to a peak of 50 on 9th November, steadily rising further to a peak of 90 on 7th December.

Eurasian Siskin *Spinus spinus*

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

A total of 16 records (seven in 2022), five in the spring (February - March) and eleven in the latter part of the year (September-December) with the latest in spring on 27th March and the first of the autumn on 14th September. Peak counts were 17 on 20th March and 14 on 5th October.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra* R

Former rare visitor, may have bred.

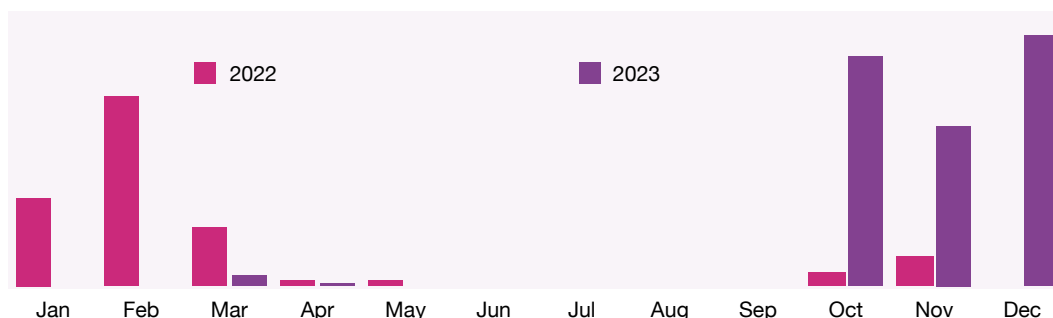
A total of 14 records with records in April (two), July (one), August (two), October (two), November (two) and December (five). From April to November the largest count was three but during December numbers increased to seven on 12th and then 15 on 15th.

A very encouraging increase for this locally scarce breeding species.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* R

Scarce visitor.

Yellowhammer - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



After two records in March, and one in April the species was virtually ever present from 5th October with counts of 15 on 25th October and 12 on 31st October and 12th December. The species was most numerous in the south-west corner of Lake Field where it formed small flocks with other buntings, but birds were also noted around Fruit Field. An encouraging increase.

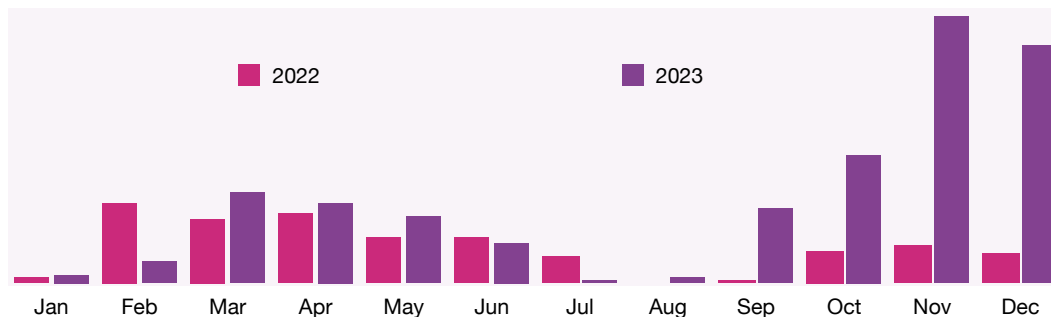
Common Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* A

Resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Three-four singing males/pairs were present in the spring, a similar number to 2022.

Birds were noted in all months although becoming very scarce in July (one record). Numbers remained in single-figures all year until October with 12 being noted on 16th, then five double figure counts in November, peaking at 15 on 17th and three in December, with a peak again of 15 on 6th. Many of these birds were in the bunting flock in the south-west corner of Lake Field and are an encouraging increase on last year.

Common Reed Bunting - relative monthly abundance in 2022-2023



LEPIDOPTERA - butterflies and moths

Butterflies

The following species were recorded during the year. Comments are based on experience of the site in previous years.

Essex Skipper	An average year
Small Skipper	An average year
Large Skipper	An average year
Orange-tip	An average year, perhaps a slight improvement on 2022
Large White	An average year
Small White	A reasonable year
Green-veined White	A better year than 2022, perhaps average
Marbled White	One in 6th July, the first site record
Brimstone	Two on 17th April and two on 20th July
Speckled Wood	An average year
Small Heath	A reasonable first brood but second brood very scarce
Ringlet	An average year
Meadow Brown	A good year
Gatekeeper	A good year
Red Admiral	A good year after a slow start.
Painted Lady	A better year with several seen regularly from mid-July
Peacock	A better year with good numbers by July
Small Tortoiseshell	A slight improvement on recent years but numbers still low
Comma	A below average year for the second year
Small Copper	A better year with records along access track, Trout Lake parking and south of Carp Lake
Purple Hairstreak	Present again along Scraley Road boundary.
Brown Argus	A much better year with numerous sightings
Common Blue	Very scarce with only a handful of records
Holly Blue	An average year

ODONATA - Dragonflies and Damselflies

The following species were recorded during the year and like butterflies, comments are based on experience of the site in previous years, although

Willow Emerald	A good year
Banded Demoiselle	One on 28th June
Azure Damselfly	Present
Common Blue Damselfly	Present, but usually more common than Azure
Red-eyed Damselfly	An average year
Small Red-eyed Damselfly	An average year
Blue-tailed Damselfly	Average year
Large Red Damselfly	A poor year again
Brown Hawker	An average year
Migrant Hawker	A better year than 2022
Emperor Dragonfly	An average year
Broad-bodied Chaser	Another poor year
Four-spotted Chaser	Average year
Black-tailed Skimmer	A good year - this is <u>the</u> summer dragonfly species around the Lakes
Ruddy Darter	Average year
Common Darter	Average year

MAMMALS

Sightings this year were restricted to Fox, Rabbit, Brown Hare (mainly in the spring), Grey Squirrel, Muntjac and Badger. The Badger record refer to the active sett along the public footpath which is assumed to be a lone male from the nearby Chigborough sett.

OTHER RECORDS

Recording of other groups is continuing to take place but listing every record will make this report too unwieldy so at some point a full list of species, updating the lists in the 2022 report, will be produced to compliment the annual reports every few years.