

# NORFOLK ORNITHOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION

## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026



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### Reserves Roundup Winter 2025/26

#### HOLME BIRD OBSERVATORY

##### December 2025

There were some good counts of Lapwings in December with 410 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 350 on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 298 on the 5<sup>th</sup> and at least 800 on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Crossbills continued to be seen regularly throughout the first half of December, with one to three recorded on various days.

December got off to a nice start with a very close Slavonian Grebe on the sea on the 1<sup>st</sup>, as well as a Great Northern Diver. On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, there was a single Purple Sandpiper on the beach, with 24 Ringed Plovers on the beach next day. We recorded three Rock Pipits and a single Grey Wagtail at Thornham on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, while a Water Pipit was at Thornham on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Two Snow Buntings were on the beach on the 5<sup>th</sup>, and 48 Skylarks were recorded on the same day. A Great Northern Diver was close inshore on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and a single Cattle Egret was with the NWT cattle off the main entrance track. A sea-watch on the 7<sup>th</sup> recorded 14 Eiders, 18 Common Scoters, a Red-throated Diver and two Great Northern Divers. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, there were nine Snow Buntings on the Beach at Gore Point, and five Cattle Egrets amongst the cows off the entrance track. During a sea-watch on the 10<sup>th</sup>, we had 17 Red-breasted Mergansers, nine Great-crested Grebes, a Great Northern Diver, seven Eiders and a Fulmar, while 87 Curlews were also seen that day. A sea-watch on the 11<sup>th</sup> recorded a Long-tailed Duck, four Red-breasted Mergansers and a Great Northern Diver. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, a sea-watch recorded 12 Red-throated Divers, four Great Northern Divers, 98

Common Scoters, six Red-breasted Mergansers, seven Great Crested Grebes, an Eider and two Fulmars. Otherwise around the reserve we recorded a Merlin and two Bullfinches. Black-throated Divers were reported on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.

More sea-watching on the 13<sup>th</sup> recorded the year's highest count of 2,000 Common Scoters, along with eight Eiders, a drake Long-tailed Duck, nine Red-breasted Mergansers, eight Fulmars, two Common Guillemots and 13 Red-throated Divers. A Merlin was also seen on the 13<sup>th</sup>. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, a Chiffchaff was around the Observatory, and an Eider, 31 Common Scoters and eight Fulmars were on the sea. Highlights around the Observatory on the 16<sup>th</sup> were a Bullfinch and a Great Spotted Woodpecker, while on the 17<sup>th</sup> there was a Chiffchaff around the Observatory. A Kingfisher and a Jay were towards Thornham, along with two Black-tailed Godwits on flooded fields on the 18<sup>th</sup>. It was quiet on the reserve on the 19<sup>th</sup>, with two Greenshanks and a Barn Owl over the grazing marshes, and four Eiders on the sea. A sea-watch on the 20<sup>th</sup> recorded six Eiders, 16 Red-throated Divers, four Fulmars and 300 Common Scoters. On the sea on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, we recorded six Eiders, 250 Common Scoters, four Red-breasted Mergansers, three Red-throated Divers, two Fulmars, a Common Guillemot and four Great Crested Grebes. There were some good counts of Snow Buntings at Gore Point over Christmas, with 40 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 34 on Christmas Eve and 30 on Christmas Day. A drake Long-tailed Duck was on the sea at Gore Point on the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>, while over 20 Snow Buntings and a Water Pipit were at Thornham pools on the 30<sup>th</sup>, when 50 Golden Plovers were in one of the grazing marsh fields towards Thornham. To end the year, the highlight on the 31<sup>st</sup> was a Ruff, which dropped in to the pools at Thornham.

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#### January 2026

January was a pretty cold and wet month generally, with below average temperatures and above average rainfall. Three Velvet Scoters were on the sea on the

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## Reserves Roundup (continued from page 1)

1<sup>st</sup>. The following day (2<sup>nd</sup>), we held our annual sponsored birdwatch in very cold and challenging conditions, and in the HBO recording area highlights included 19 Snow Buntings over and two Kittiwakes recorded during a sea-watch from Gore Point. First thing on the 7<sup>th</sup>, a Woodcock was flushed out of The Pines and then a second was flushed en route to the hides. There was also a drake Goldeneye on the sea. Conditions were poor on the 9<sup>th</sup>, with highlights being two Bearded Tits flying across from the third NWT Hide and a Woodcock near the Heligoland trap. We recorded a beautiful drake Long-tailed Duck east on the 11<sup>th</sup>. A group of 11 Bewick's/Whooper Swans flew over on the 11<sup>th</sup>, but sadly by the time we picked them up they were flying away distantly and it was impossible to see which species they were. Also on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the cold weather likely pushed feeding Common Gulls from the frozen fields, increasing the number feeding on the beach with over 320 recorded. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, the highlight was a close in Long-tailed Duck sitting on the sea. There were 18 Ringed Plovers on the beach in a single flock, and a Peregrine was on the beach towards Gore Point. There was a good count of 40 Snow Buntings at Gore Point on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Next day (15<sup>th</sup>), we recorded two Woodcocks on the reserve.

The 16<sup>th</sup> was a good day with a drake Long-tailed Duck off Gore Point, two Velvet Scoters east, a Black-throated Diver resting on the sea from the dunes, and four Ruff in a flooded field near the Thornham Coal Barn. A drake Long-tailed Duck was on the sea on the 19<sup>th</sup>. I came across a Norwegian-ringed Great Black-backed Gull, ringed originally as a chick in 2013, which stuck around for a few days on the beach. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, an Egyptian Goose flew over the track first thing in the morning and a Long-tailed Duck was still on the sea. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, a Cattle Egret was standing on one of the ponies on the grazing marshes. A Great Northern Diver was fishing in Thornham Channel on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, while 12 Snow Buntings were between the Golf Course and Gore Point on the beach, and a female Blackcap was seen near the Observatory. Highlights on the 25<sup>th</sup> included three Cattle Egrets in Holme Village, a single Spoonbill flying east, and two Greenshanks at Gore Point. Two Spoonbills went east over the grazing marshes on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Two Harbour Porpoises went east close in on the sea on the 28<sup>th</sup>, and nine Red Kites were together on the beach. There was a ringtail Hen Harrier over East Bank on the 29<sup>th</sup> with 14 Eiders on the sea.

### February 2026

A large flock of 6,000 Pink-footed Geese was in front of the Obs on the 1<sup>st</sup> with two Tundra Bean Geese and two White-fronted Geese, the White-fronts being the forerunners of much larger numbers as the month progressed. A Woodcock was flushed from the path to the car park hides on the 4<sup>th</sup>, eight Eiders were off Gore Point, and two Ruff were at Thornham. There were two Cattle Egrets, three Woodcock, a Greenshank and a Blackcap present on the 6<sup>th</sup>, while three Cattle Egrets were in the paddocks on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. The effects of the influx of White-fronted Geese into eastern and southern England started to show on the 11<sup>th</sup>, when 40 were on the south side of Rowan's Pool seen from the NOA car park hide and the first NWT hide. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, there was a single Crossbill in the Pines, while nine White-fronted Geese and three Cattle Egrets were also present. There were 25 Snow Buntings on the strand line at Gore Point on the 13<sup>th</sup>. There was also a female Blackcap from Dell Hide and 19 White-fronted Geese from the car park hides.

At least 70 White-fronted Geese were present in the recording area on the 16<sup>th</sup> (55 on Holme Marsh and 15 behind Rowan's Pool). This was a new record count for the Observatory recording area, beating counts of 63 made in both February and March 1996. It was good to see a flock of 215 Curlews at Whitehall Farm, as this was about twice as big as any flock seen at Holme in 2025. A Greenshank was on the Lavender Marsh. The White-fronted Geese remained on the 18<sup>th</sup> with 45 viewable from the first NWT Hide, and 180 Curlews were present. A pair of Crossbills came to drink from the pond in front of the Dell Hide, and the female was the rare variant that had very narrow white wing bars. Thirty-five Fieldfares were at Drove Orchards. Eight Crossbills flew west from The Pines in the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, a drake Long-tailed Duck flew west over the sea and 67 White-fronted Geese were recorded from the NWT hides. There were 38 Snow Buntings on the beach on the 21<sup>st</sup>, and 30 on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. An impressive 115 White-fronted Geese were on Holme Marsh viewable from the coastal footpath on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and at least 1,500 Pink-footed Geese flew over, while five Bullfinches were near the Village Hides. Two Ravens were in The Pines on the 25<sup>th</sup>, before flying to Thornham Harbour and then back to The Pines. A Chiffchaff was singing in the dunes and a Short-eared Owl was reported, while three Great

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White Egrets were seen and 23 Pochards were on Broad Water. The number of Chiffchaffs in the recording area increased on the 27<sup>th</sup> with four present (one in the dunes and three in the pines) but none were singing. On the same day, a Bittern flew in front of NWT Hide three into the reeds then flew towards the NWT village hides giving great views. At Gore Point, 15 Snow Buntings were on the upper strand line with a flock of Linnets.

## REDWELL MARSH

### December 2025

As rainfall increased in December the main scrape went from being virtually dry to being full of water, and 96 Teal, a Curlew and a Black-tailed Godwit were attracted on the 20<sup>th</sup>. A Grey Wagtail was on the far side of the scrape seen from the hide on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. A Firecrest was with a family of Long-tailed Tits by the bridge on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the Firecrest was seen again at the reserve on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

### January 2026

Perhaps surprisingly, there were no records in January until the 28<sup>th</sup>, when 75 Teal were present, with a Grey Heron the next day.

### February 2026

A drake Pintail was in front of the hide with 52 Teal on the 16<sup>th</sup>, along with a three Wigeon, a Redshank, 22 Black-headed Gulls and two Common Gulls. A Cattle Egret was seen on the 28<sup>th</sup>, when a Cetti's Warbler was singing along the River Hun.

## WALSEY HILLS

### December 2025

There were records of Glossy Ibis throughout the month, with a peak count of three individuals on several dates. On the 9<sup>th</sup> there were three Caspian Gulls roosting on North Scrape and one Jack Snipe on Pat's Pool. Water Pipits were also regular visitors on the NWT Cley reserve; one to two were reported on several dates, with a peak count of four on Pat's Pool on the 13<sup>th</sup>. Also on the 13<sup>th</sup>, ten Twite were reported on the saltmarsh northwest of Cley. A Siberian Chiffchaff was reported near the NWT Visitor Centre on the 15<sup>th</sup>. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, four Caspian Gulls were on North Scrape. On the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, a White-fronted Goose was with the Pink-footed Geese on Arnold's Marsh, and two Jack Snipe were on the reserve on the 18<sup>th</sup>. On Christmas Eve, it was a good day for geese

with seven White-fronted Geese and three Tundra Bean Geese on the Cley reserve. On Christmas Day, three Snow Buntings were reported plus a single Tundra Bean Goose, and on the 27<sup>th</sup>, a Great Shearwater flew east very close in past the beach car park. Two Snow Buntings remained on the beach on the 27<sup>th</sup> and then 30 were reported on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

### January 2026

On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, there were three Glossy Ibis over the NWT Cley reserve. Two Tundra Bean Geese were on Cricket Marsh, remaining on the NWT reserve until the 4<sup>th</sup>. Two Snow Buntings were on the beach on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, and there were six Russian White-fronted Geese on Cricket Marsh on the 4<sup>th</sup>. A Black-throated Diver and a Long-tailed Duck were on the sea on the 8<sup>th</sup>. An adult Caspian gull was at North Scrape on the 12<sup>th</sup>, with 30 Snow Buntings on the beach on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. A Pale-bellied Brent Goose and four Russian White-fronted Geese were on Pat's Pool on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and a Slavonian Grebe was on the sea next day (18<sup>th</sup>). The Snow Bunting count was up to 40 on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Two Russian White-fronted Geese were on Pat's Pool on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. A Jack Snipe was seen from Bishops Hide on the 24<sup>th</sup>, with a Slavonian Grebe noted on the sea. A Lapland Bunting was reported at North Pool on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when six Russian White-fronted Geese were on the NWT reserve. Thirty Snow Buntings were still on the beach on the 30<sup>th</sup>, and a Glossy Ibis flew southeast over the Cley reserve. A Jack Snipe was recorded again on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

### February 2026

Water Pipits were seen well throughout February on the Cley NWT reserve. There were 30 Snow Buntings on the beach on the 4<sup>th</sup>, when three Caspian Gulls were seen from Gillmor Hide. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, 46 Russian White-fronted Geese flew east, followed on the 7<sup>th</sup> by about another 100. A single Pale-bellied Brent Goose was on the NWT reserve on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, and a Glaucous Gull flew west on the 13<sup>th</sup>. A small flock of Russian White-fronted Geese was seen from East Bank on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, with a peak count of 24 birds. Two Snow Buntings were on the shingle east of East Bank on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and a Richard's Pipit was reported over west bank on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Thirteen Russian White-fronted Geese were seen from East Bank on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and a Long-tailed Duck was at the east end of Arnold's Marsh from the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>.

*Shannon Clifford.*

## NOTICEBOARD

### NOA 200 Club: January 2026 Draw

Drawn on 8<sup>th</sup> January, total shares in draw: 119

**1st Prize**, £178.50: share no. 64, M Clay,

**2nd Prize**, £89.25: share no. 146, D Dobby,

**3rd Prize**, £35.70: share no. 280, F Schumann,

**4th Prizes**, 3 prizes of £17.85 each:-

share no. 75, M Crawley,

share no. 219, J Crich, and

share no. 108, K and L Beswick.

Congratulations to the winners and many thanks to everyone who has purchased shares. The next draw will be made in April 2026.

*Kath Trinder*

*200 Club Promoter*

### NOA GRAND DRAW – NEW YEAR 2025

Many thanks to everyone who bought tickets for our Grand Draw, which was held on 8<sup>th</sup> January. The net proceeds go into maintenance and equipment for our reserves and wildlife monitoring.

#### Our winners were as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 204	S Proctor
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 1037	S Newbold
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 4179	A Comber
4 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 3153	D Hutchins
5 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 7221	G Worsfold
6 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 5809	D Muirhead
7 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 3757	B A York
8 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 9487	R C Mansfield
9 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 7162	P Redfearn
10 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 9382	P J Holt
11 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 1975	S Nichols
12 <sup>th</sup> Prize	Ticket No: 5306	D Hasler

### Moth mornings at HBO

Holme Bird Observatory will be holding moth mornings every Wednesday, starting at 10 am.

Everyone is welcome to join us to look in our moth traps to see what we've caught.

We record species and number caught before the moths are safely released. All of this data goes to Norfolk Moths to help to increase scientific understanding of moths for conservation efforts, for example, identifying new species and contributing to knowledge of changing moth ranges and distributions. Entry is free to NOA members, but we suggest a £5 donation from non-members (free to those under 25).

## Membership Renewals

We'd like to inform members who have recently renewed, or are currently renewing, that there may be a delay in our response at this time.

Owing to staffing issues that we are working to resolve, applications and renewals are currently being handled on a temporary basis by one of our Trustees. This has coincided with our busiest renewal period of the year, which has unfortunately led to a backlog. Please be assured that all memberships will be processed as soon as possible and that existing membership cards will remain valid until your new ones arrive.

Looking ahead, we are pleased to say that we are beginning an important IT project, funded by a National Lottery grant. This will modernise and streamline our membership management system, making it far more efficient and less reliant on manual processes — a vital improvement for a small, volunteer-led organisation like the NOA. We hope to have the new system up and running by the summer.

## Sponsored Birdwatch

Our annual sponsored birdwatch took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026, a date which allowed Shannon Clifford to take part as our new Warden. A group consisting of Shannon, Ed Tooth, Ben Rackstraw, Dave Nurney and Steve Newman met at 7.30 at the Saltings car park before birding at Holme, and travelling via Old Hunstanton, Ringstead and Choseley, then meeting up with Roger Skeen at Titchwell. Although it remained almost entirely dry, the conditions were challenging to say the least, because it was bitterly cold, with an icy wind making sea-watching close to impossible. Nevertheless, we were rewarded for our efforts by seeing 103 species between dawn and dusk, late sightings at Titchwell of White-fronted Goose, Merlin, Barn Owl and Woodcock helping to get us across the 100 species line. Many thanks to everyone who sponsored this winter's event.