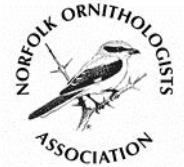


NORFOLK ORNITHOLOGISTS' ASSOCIATION

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2026



Registered Charity No. 267670

Broadwater Road, Holme-next-the-Sea, Hunstanton, Norfolk, PE36 6LQ

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Lucy Ferrer BSc, MSc, Dr Keith Fox BA, MSc, PhD, Barrie Hunt BSc, Michael Rae MSc, Greg Sinfield MA, Roger Skeen, Ed Tooth

General news and updates from NOA

The NOA is Moving Forward

Back in February the full Council of Trustees together with Shannon, our Warden, took the opportunity to review our long-term vision and strategy for the NOA, spending a whole day in discussion.

Starting with the Vision, the Trustees were unanimous in their belief that over the next 10 years we must continue to drive towards being a leading UK bird observatory, recognised for high-quality research into bird migration while remaining a welcoming and enjoyable place for everyone interested in wildlife.

The focus of activity will continue to centre on Holme, with Walsey Hills supporting as a satellite site. Alongside important scientific work such as ringing, MOTUS tracking and collaboration with national and international migration projects, the Observatory aims to be known for its friendly atmosphere, knowledgeable volunteers and strong connections with both the local and national birding community.

Members and visitors alike should experience a genuine warm welcome, opportunities to learn new skills, and the chance to see environmental science in action through ringing demonstrations, open days, moth mornings and sea-watching. The vision also highlights the importance of maintaining excellent governance and long-term financial security to support future generations.

Importantly, the Observatory sees itself as a "birding oasis" - a calm and inspiring place for birders, researchers, volunteers, families and interested visitors alike. While conservation partnerships remain important, the Observatory's primary role will continue to focus on ornithological research, education and engagement.

In order to deliver this Vision the group defined five Strategic Priorities:

Science and Bird Study

Engagement with our Supporters: Members and Community

Financial Sustainability

Land and Property Review

Effective Governance

Each priority has been carefully defined, and plans are being developed to enable effective delivery. The Trustees are being careful to ensure all plans are sense-checked to make sure that they are realistic and deliverable, identifying potential risk and failure points as well as assessing and allocating resources and responsibilities.

We will ensure we keep you, our members, updated as we move forward.

Volunteer with Us

The NOA and Holme Bird Observatory rely on volunteers to help our two staff members keep everything running, and we'd love a few more people to join us!

Whether you can help from home or get involved on site, every bit of support makes a real difference.

There are lots of ways you could help from practical activities at our various reserves to home-based tasks such as data management, from bird recording to fundraising, from helping with visitors to writing articles for the newsletter.

If you've got a little spare time and would like to be part of what we do, we'd love to hear from you!

Call in, ring us at 01485 525406 or drop us an email to info@noa.org.uk

Do you know about Health & Safety?

Our current H&S volunteer is stepping down from involvement with the NOA this autumn, so we are keen to find someone to step into his shoes.

You don't have to be an international expert, just someone with an awareness, interest in or knowledge of the subject.

Could that be you? If yes, ring us at 01485 525406 or drop an email to info@noa.org.uk

Future of the Grand Draw

As most of you will know, NOA has for many years held an annual Grand Draw, with tickets being distributed to members along with the Annual Report, and the draw taking place in the following January. We have become concerned that the Grand Draw no longer raises the funds that it once did, while the staff and volunteer time required to administer the draw has grown considerably. It has therefore been agreed not to hold any further Grand Draws, but to replace them with regular appeals linked to specific projects or objectives, as we believe that these are likely to generate greater support and engagement. Further details about these will be provided in due course.

Is your standing order up to date?

In our last newsletter, we let members know about the recent membership fee increase and asked anyone paying by Standing Order to update the amount with their bank. You will find the current membership fees at <https://noa.org.uk/noa-memberships/>

If you pay this way, please could you take a moment to check that your Standing Order has been updated? We know life gets busy and these things are easily overlooked, but membership subscriptions are a vital part of keeping the observatory running and supporting our work.

If you haven't yet updated your payment, we'd be very grateful if you could arrange this with your bank at your earliest convenience.

Thank you very much for your continued support.

Hempton Marsh Reserve Update

Unfortunately, the reserve is currently closed due to the boardwalk across the marsh areas being in a dangerous condition. We have been replacing small sections as they rotted but unfortunately the problem is now beyond simple repair and the whole boardwalk needs replacing.

Due to our limited manpower resources our priorities at present have to be focused on maintaining infrastructure at our Holme and Walsey Hills locations, where we see far higher visitor numbers. The boardwalk at Hempton Marsh is not currently considered a priority. In the meantime, although closed to visitors, Hempton Marsh continues to enjoy protected status as a nature reserve.

NOA 200 Club: April 2026 Draw

Drawn on 26th April, total shares in draw: 93

1st Prize, £139.50: share no. 139, J Campton,

2nd Prize, £69.75: share no. 280, F Schumann,

3rd Prize, £27.90: share no. 40, A Priestley,

4th Prizes, 3 prizes of £13.95 each:-

share no. 230, S Kerrigan,

share no. 125, J Hatton, and

share no. 24, J Burrows.

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

Kath Trinder

200 Club Promoter

Are We Missing Your Email Address?

We are currently sending newsletters through the post to many members for whom we don't have an email address.

With postage costs higher than ever, and the cost of paper rising, every member who switches to email helps us direct more of our funds towards bird science and conservation activities. So, please, if you receive your newsletter as a hard copy in the post and would be happy to receive it electronically, please let us know by emailing info@noa.org.uk. Thank you.

BIRD NEWS - RESERVES ROUNDUP

HOLME BIRD OBSERVATORY

March 2026

On the 2nd, at least 40 White-fronted Geese dropped onto the grazing marshes close to the hides. A Treecreeper was around the Observatory on the 4th, and a drake Pintail was on Broad Water on the 5th. Single Snow Buntings and Shore Larks were on the beach towards Gore Point on the 6th, and 115 White-fronted Geese were on the grazing marsh viewable from the hides but were difficult to see. This impressive flock of White-fronts set a new record count for the HBO recording area. On the 7th, there were seven Snow Buntings at Gore Point in the morning, and a surprise Red-breasted Merganser was on Broad Water. On the 9th, the White-fronted Geese were back again on the grazing marshes, with at least 100 birds present, and the total had risen to 140 on the 10th, when they were joined by the first Wheatear of the spring. Also on the 10th, there was a nice flock of 23 Black-tailed Godwits, two Pintails and two Ruff on the pools at Thornham. The first Little Ringed Plover of the spring was seen on the 11th, showing really well from the NOA car park hide and first NWT hide, but it was periodically chased off by an Oystercatcher. A Bittern was booming on the 12th, and a flock of 13 Long-tailed Ducks flew west over the sea on the 13th. Two Crossbills landed in the Alder tree right outside the Observatory and then two Spoonbills flew east. Twenty-seven White-fronted Geese were seen from the car park hide. A Bittern was showing well from the third NWT hide on the 14th, while two Sandwich Terns, a Green Woodpecker and a single Rook were of note on the 15th.

On the 17th, a Swallow was seen at Gore Point, and was the first of the year in the recording area, while 92 White-fronted Geese showed really well from the car park hide. On the 18th, a Peregrine was at Gore Point, two Crossbills (a male and female) were showing well from the NWT Visitor Centre, and a Mediterranean Gull flew over the Observatory late afternoon. A Woodcock was in the dunes on the 19th, and a single Brambling, two Siskins and a Redpoll went over. A Grey Wagtail came in off the sea on the 20th, and then went south. Two Crossbills were near the NWT Visitor Centre in the afternoon, six Barnacle Geese were circling over the grazing marshes, and 70 White-fronted Geese were still present. Two Red-necked Grebes were on the sea off the Golf Course on the 21st. Two Redpolls and two Crossbills went over the Observatory and a Bearded Tit was showing well from the third NWT hide. On the 22nd, a Raven flew over Gore Point, four Crossbills went east, a male Hen Harrier was at Thornham, and a Cattle Egret was with the cows. Eight Crossbills were in The Pines on the 23rd. There was good passage of Meadow Pipits on the 24th with 145 recorded, and six Cattle Egrets were present. A Bittern was seen in flight over the grazing marshes on the 25th, and 37 Kittiwakes were recorded off Gore Point going into The Wash on the 26th. A single Swallow went west through The Pines on the 27th. Two Ravens went east over the grazing marshes on the 28th before disappearing over the seawall and onto the saltmarsh. Four Crossbills flew west on the 30th, and the Ravens were seen again flying over the Observatory.

April 2026

On April 1st, a Sedge Warbler was briefly singing by the NWT entrance gate. In the afternoon, two White-tailed Eagles went over Thornham then flew south-west. On the 2nd, we recorded Kittiwake passage with at least 84 passing, mostly adults. There were also three Crossbills around the Observatory. Two Blackcaps and 11 Chiffchaffs were on Holme Marsh on the 4th, and the following day the first Ring Ouzel of the spring (a female) turned up in the usual area in the NWT dunes, while five Sand Martins were recorded. On the 6th, a House Martin, two Swallows, a Brambling and a Redpoll all flew west, a Green Sandpiper was calling over Broad Water, two Crossbills were in The Pines, and a Willow Warbler was in the scrub north of the NOA car park. A male Ring Ouzel was in the dunes on the 7th, three Sand Martins flew east, and a Brambling was by the Observatory first thing. The male Ring Ouzel was still in the dunes next day (8th) along with three Wheatears. A Brambling was by the Observatory pond and ten Yellow Wagtails flew west. The male Ring Ouzel was still in the dunes on the 9th, and a Stone Curlew was also found there; with very few previous records, this was a great bird to see in the recording area. Two Grasshopper Warblers were in the recording area (one in the dunes and one on the Observatory reserve), while five Ruff were seen from the car park hide and the first Lesser Whitethroat of the year was recorded. On the 10th, the dunes contained at least three Ring Ouzels, six Wheatears and a Redstart. The pools near Thornham Harbour were becoming productive with a Whimbrel, three Little Ringed Plovers, two Wheatears, 13 Ruff and a Spoonbill all present. There was also a Reed Warbler singing near the NWT Visitor Centre. Three Ring Ouzels, 11 Wheatears, two Redstarts (a male and female) and a fly-over Yellow Wagtail were all recorded in the dunes on the 11th. At Thornham there were two Little Ringed Plovers, two Pintail, a Whimbrel and two Wheatears, while we recorded 33 Swallows, 15 House Martins and three Sand Martins moving west along with a Tree Pipit. On the 12th, there were at least two Ring Ouzels, two Redstarts and seven Wheatears in the dunes. A Yellow Wagtail was calling as it flew over the car park area, and there was a continuing trickle of hirundines across the day with at least 24 Swallows, 12 House Martins and seven Sand Martins recorded. A single Whimbrel was on the beach. On the 13th, there were two male Ring Ouzels, a Redstart and five Wheatears in the dunes, while three Whimbrels were in a field at

Thornham Harbour. With birds moving, it was a good day for ringing with 11 Chiffchaffs, a Willow Warbler, eight Blackcaps, two Sedge Warblers and two Reed Warblers all caught. Two Ring Ouzels and a Redstart were in the dunes on the 14th. A third Ring Ouzel was on Observatory East Bank before flying into the Alder tree, disappearing over the grazing marshes, and then reappearing back on East Bank hours later. A Brambling was in the Poplar tree by the car park in the morning. Two Ring Ouzels, eight Wheatears and a Yellow Wagtail were in the dunes on the 16th, five Whimbrels were at Thornham and a male Bullfinch was around the Observatory.

The first Cuckoos of the spring were heard on the 17th, with one around the Observatory, one towards Thornham and one in the dunes. A new species for Holme was recorded on the 18th, in the form of a second-calendar-year Ross's Gull. It was first seen at Titchwell, before moving to Choseley, and then spending the afternoon on fields in the south of our recording area where it sometimes hawked insects with Black-headed Gulls. Two Ring Ouzels and 14 Wheatears were in the dunes on the 19th, and there was a report of a Blue-headed Wagtail. On the same day, a Grasshopper Warbler was at the NWT entrance gate and a male Redstart was in the scrub on the Observatory reserve. A Grey Wagtail was near the Observatory on the 20th, with four Spoonbills showing well from the third NWT hide. Two Ring Ouzels, 13 Wheatears and four Whimbrels were also recorded, with a Wood Sandpiper noted at Thornham Harbour. In the late afternoon of the 20th, a male and female Garganey were found on Broad Water, and the following morning they were still showing well from the NOA car park hide along with three Ruff. A Ring Ouzel was recorded in the dunes, two Whimbrels flew over Broad Water first thing, and five Crossbills were in The Pines. On the 22nd, two Greenshanks and three Spoonbills were on Broad Water, two Ring Ouzels were in the dunes, and two Glossy Ibises flew northwest over Holme Dunes towards Hunstanton. Seven Whimbrels flew over Broad Water on the 23rd, and the following day (24th) 17 Whimbrels were recorded - seven at Thornham, one on the grazing marshes and nine on the beach. Also on the 24th, a Little Ringed Plover flew east along Broad Water, two Ring Ouzels and five Wheatears were in the dunes, three Ruff were seen from NWT hides and a Hobby was recorded. The highlight of the 25th was a White Stork which had been tracked along the coast from Sheringham, and which reached Holme at around midday. We were treated to it circling high over the grazing marshes, being mobbed by three Red Kites, before it slowly drifted west again right over the NWT pools. Two Yellow Wagtails flew west over the Observatory, and 12 Yellow Wagtails were later seen by a pool along the entrance track with a Hobby also recorded. There was a mini-influx of Sedge Warblers on the 26th with several caught including a French-ringed individual, while two Tree Pipits, three Yellow Wagtails and three Crossbills flew overhead. A Garden Warbler was heard at the Observatory on the 27th, while at Thornham there were nine Ruff and eight Whimbrels. A Ring Ouzel was in the dunes on the 28th, and two Little Terns were recorded on a sea-watch. Two Whinchats (a male and a female) showed well from the first NWT hide on the 29th, and five Whimbrels flew over the Observatory. To round off April, there were six Wheatears and a Ring Ouzel in the dunes on the 30th.

May 2026

A Black Redstart was found in the dunes on the NWT reserve on the 1st, when six Wheatears were also in the dunes. A Crane circled over the pools before slowly drifting west. An unseasonal pair of Fieldfares were in the dunes on the 2nd, and there was some Swallow passage with 47 recorded in total. A few Terns (Common, Sandwich and Little) were moving offshore. Four Fieldfares and a male Redstart were in the dunes on the 3rd, and the passage of Swallows continued with 302 flying west, along with 20 Sand Martins and 20 House Martins. Two Spoonbills were in front of the car park hide and a Bittern was seen in flight. Two Cuckoos were at the Observatory, perching in The Pines and along Broad Water, and were singing for most of the day. At least one Cuckoo continued to be seen or heard regularly throughout the month. Eight Yellow Wagtails were also recorded on the 3rd, six at one of the NWT pools and two overhead. Two Great White Egrets were seen on the 4th, one being in breeding plumage. On the 5th, a Common Sandpiper was on Broad Water, and a female Pied Flycatcher was found late evening on the edge of the NOA car park; it was showing really well the following day (6th) when there were still four Fieldfares and a Wheatear in the dunes. The focus was on ringing on the 7th, when the second French-ringed Sedge Warbler of the spring was caught. There were six Lesser White-throats on the Observatory reserve, two Spoonbills were showing well from the car park hide, the female Pied Flycatcher was still around, and four Fieldfares were still in the dunes. The 8th was generally quiet for birds, but first thing in the morning there were three Common Terns over Broad Water. The Cuckoo was again doing its rounds and a Spoonbill was feeding in front of the car park hide. A Tawny Owl has was hooting in The Pines at various times of the day, and was heard again on many days later in the month. A Rook flew through; although a common bird elsewhere they only seen infrequently in the recording area. In 1.5 hours of sea-watching on the 10th, we recorded 35 Brent Geese, two Eiders (a male and female), a Red-breasted Merganser, two Whimbrels, three Kittiwakes, 14 Little Terns, three Common Terns, seven Common or Arctic Terns, 38 Sandwich Terns, a Red-throated Diver, ten Gannets, five Fulmars and 13 Grey Plovers. A Spoonbill was on Broad Water on the 12th, with two Turnstones and five Sanderlings on the beach.

A Whinchat was seen on the 13th, when 26 Swifts passed west. A Common Sandpiper was on Broad Water on the 14th, and there was a Greenshank there on the 15th. A foraging party of Swifts and Swallows was around the Observatory first thing on the 16th, when seven Crossbills were in The Pines, seven Fulmars were offshore, and there were seven Little Terns and a Wheatear at Gore Point. A Spoonbill and a Shelduck family including chicks were on Broad Water on the 18th, while a Little Ringed Plover was at Thornham pools. A Greenshank was at Gore Point on the 20th, and activity on the sea included two Kittiwakes, a Razorbill, seven Cormorants, nine Common Scoters, five Little Terns, two Common Terns and three Brent Geese. Four Mediterranean Gulls were offshore the following day (21st). Nine Crossbills were in The Pines on the 22nd, when three Great White Egrets were seen and a Short-eared Owl was at Lavender Marsh. Over 200 Black-headed Gulls were feeding on an invertebrate hatch on Broad Water on the 25th, and three Spoonbills were present on the 26th. Two Cranes flew east over the grazing marshes on the 28th, and were seen at Titchwell a few minutes later. Three Spoonbills were on Broad Water on the 30th, and at least three Crossbills were in The Pines.

REDWELL MARSH

March 2026

A few Wigeon, Gadwall and Teal were recorded throughout March. The first Chiffchaff was singing along the river on the 5th, the first Avocet returned on the 16th, with the first Shelducks on the 22nd. A pair of Bullfinches were near the hide on the 24th. Four Mediterranean Gulls few over calling on the 25th.

April 2026

A Lesser Whitethroat was recorded at Redwell on the 11th. Mid-April onwards saw more waders using the scrape, with regular reports of Avocet, Greenshank, Lapwing, Snipe and Oystercatcher. Avocets reached a peak of 14 on the 21st, and there were six Redshanks present on the 19th.

May 2026

A Grey Wagtail and a Cuckoo on the 2nd were good starts to the month. One to two Common Sandpipers were seen on most visits in the first half of the month, along with a single Greenshank, and there was a peak count of 12 Avocets on the 6th. Two Ruff were seen from the hide on the 19th, one of which was an adult male in summer plumage and sporting a fine ruff. By mid-month, the scrape was drying out rapidly, and there was no water at all by the 27th.

WALSEY HILLS

March 2026

A few Water Pipits continued to be seen well in the Cley area during March. A Sand Martin flew over Simmonds scrape on the 1st, and three Cranes flew east over the NWT reserve on the 2nd. A Little Ringed Plover was on the NWT reserve on the 7th and 8th, and a single Crane was recorded on the NWT reserve on the 11th. A Swallow flew west over Simmond's Scrape on the 15th. A Short-eared Owl was seen south of the beach car park on the 20th, and 15 Twite were near East Bank on the 23rd. Two Glossy Ibises were at Arnold's Marsh on the 23rd and 16 Twite were near East Bank on the 28th. A White-tailed Eagle landed on Pat's Pool on the 30th.

April 2026

Two Short-eared Owls were seen from Beach Road on the 2nd, and three Glossy Ibises were on the NWT reserve on the same day. A Sedge Warbler was heard singing from Walsey Hills on the 4th. Two Garganey were seen from Babcock hide on the 8th along with a male Ring Ouzel, with the Garganey still present on the 9th. An Osprey flew west along the beach on the 11th, and a single Glossy Ibis was recorded on the 12th. The Garganey pair were still on the NWT reserve on the 15th, and another Osprey flew west along the shore at Cley on the 16th. A Wood Sandpiper was on the NWT reserve on the 19th. Four Spotted Redshanks were at Pope's Pool on the 25th. A Whinchat was reported on the 27th, and two Wood Sandpipers were on the NWT reserve. A Garganey pair were still showing well from Babcock Hide on the 29th, while a Curlew Sandpiper was on Pat's Pool on the 30th.

May 2026

Highlights in May in the Walsey Hills area included a Wryneck along the public footpath near the NWT Visitor Centre until the 5th. Two Garganey were seen from Babcock Hide early in the month, and Temminck's Stints were regular at North Scrape and from Babcock Hide. A European Red-rumped Swallow was over reeds opposite the Visitor Centre on the 4th. A Glossy Ibis was present in the last week on the month. A Gull-billed Tern was seen from Babcock Hide on the 29th before landing at Pat's Pool and then on North Scrape. A second-calendar-year Montagu's Harrier was seen at Walsey Hills on the 30th and 31st.