

Dear Residents/Permit holders of Needs Ore,

This latest letter is a summary of what has been happening over the last year or so on the Nature Reserve at Needs Ore.

As most of you will be aware the Needs Ore reserve is part of the North Solent National Nature Reserve and the surrounding area is of **National Importance** for its breeding bird population, and of **International Importance** for its over-wintering species of wildfowl and waders.

Now more than ever we must protect all these species as nationally they are declining in alarming numbers. Fortunately at Needs Ore, we are managing to maintain stable numbers of these species with a slight increase in some breeding species.

Over the 2021 breeding season we did have stable numbers of breeding wading birds such as Lapwing, Redshank, Avocet, Oystercatcher, with an increase in Ringed Plover, and a new breeding species for the site; Little Ringed Plover.



Little Ringed Plover by Chris Button

All the above species breed on the open coastal grazing grassland, lagoons, and shingle beaches.

Some of the passerine species of birds which nested on the reserve at Gravelly Marsh and in the reed beds on Blackwater were Dartford Warbler, Linnet, Reed Bunting, Whitethroat, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler and Cetti's Warbler.

The 2021 Autumn welcomed Osprey back to the river, with two individuals hanging about for several weeks and giving great views fishing for small mullet in the De L'Orne lagoon. There was a good Autumn passage of various warblers with some days Chiffchaffs seemingly in every bush, while the next day it seemed to be Willow Warblers. There were also a decent number of Yellow Wagtails, especially in the fields where the cattle were grazing.

The Winter of 2021 has so far seen the wildfowl starting to arrive, Brent Geese have returned from Siberia to spend the Winter with us and the impressive Spoonbills are increasing in numbers also.

2021 News

A lot of work has been achieved in 2021 even with the restrictions of Covid which has made it difficult at times.

Bird hides – 2 brand new bird hides have been put in to replace the old De L'Orne hide, and the James Venner hide. This is part of a long-term plan to replace all the old hides with new ones. The feedback I have received from visitors is that the new hides have been a success.



Osprey with Mullet

Reedbed management – once again part of a long-term management plan for the site is to start scraping reedbeds back as they have now encroached onto the open standing water. Even though reedbeds are an important habitat, we are fortunate enough to have lots of reedbeds on site, so a small amount each year being scraped back will not have a significant impact on species relying on reedbeds for the homes.

Scrapes – new scrapes have been established this year in the De L'Orne water body, these are for potential breeding areas next spring/summer and loafing areas during the winter months.

New wardening scheme – There are more volunteer wardens put in place now at Needs Ore and Park Shore. They are here to make sure the rules are adhered too and engage with people helping people learn more about the site and enjoy their experiences. Also, we have been having additional volunteers in place every weekend and Bank holiday during April – July based at Needs Ore point to watch and monitor Gull Island/Warren Shore. These volunteers are here to help protect the nesting birds and to stop/report any incidents of people landing/walking out onto Gull Island/Warren Shore. Their fantastic efforts this year have led to one of the best nesting seasons for certain species for a long time.

Volunteering on the reserve – I have been restricted over the past few years due to Covid on having volunteer groups out helping on the reserve. This has been tough as I rely heavily on all their help. But restrictions on Covid have slowly been eased over time and groups have been allowed out. If anybody wishes to be part of the groups that do any of the conservation work out on the reserve, please feel free to contact me if you are interested, it is a great way to engage with like-minded people, great for your wellbeing, and we always enjoy a cup of tea/coffee with a bit of cake.



No reporting of bird news – I just want to reiterate that part of the rules of visiting Needs Ore is that you are not allowed to broadcast on internet/social media any bird sighting stating Needs Ore/ Warren Farm/Park Shore/Beaulieu River. Anybody found breaking these rules will have their permit withdrawn or refused to be issued a permit.

Some Important information

As mentioned above, the Beaulieu Estate and Natural England have been working within some of the water bodies, some ongoing maintenance, but also to create more islands and change the topography of some of the lagoon and pools. This work is part of an ongoing plan to increase nesting and roosting opportunities for a number of species, and also hopefully make a more diverse mix of feeding areas for different species. One of our main aims is to increase the capacity for nesting Avocet, the numbers of which have been steadily growing on the reserve over the past decade.



Avocets by Chris Button

Across the reserve we do have a diverse mix of nesting bird interest; from small warblers to ground nesting waders and of course the Gulls and Terns – many of them are individually of high conservation concern, but such a diverse mix is extremely important. As part of our contact and communications we thought it prudent to remind everyone on and around the reserve to please be mindful of our nesting interests, many of which are hidden among the grassland and scrub – carefully managed by Beaulieu Estate/Natural England for the very purpose of increasing the nesting success. From the beginning of March (and often earlier) through to August many species will start to seek out territories and nesting sites and might even try to nest multiple times.

During this time, we, as reserve/estate staff and others involved in the management of the reserve try to minimise disturbance to our nesting interest, and we kindly ask you to do the same. The species we have here at Needs Ore are particularly susceptible to disturbance and when repeated this can have detrimental impacts on the success of individuals, colonies, and the site as a whole.

It might be worth noting that disturbance to some of our resident nesting species can be an offence under law. It is not permitted to walk any dogs onto the reserve, the only areas where dogs can be exercised is along Warren Lane, and we would ask that upmost care is taken around Needs Ore point (and the Boat Club), as some species nest on the ground throughout this area. If you own cats, we would strongly urge you to fit them with a collar and bell, and try to restrict their access to areas where our birds are nesting and/or have chicks – chicks of ground nesting species are extremely susceptible to predation by cats.

In the past all parties involved in this area of the reserve have agreed to share a common goal of Privacy, Security and Protection of the existing nature and animal/bird life of the site – which I would imagine remains unchanged. We ask that as we do, all residents continue to comply with these agreements and that you inform all your visitors and/or guests of these to ensure the continued good relationship with site staff and permit holders.

The following are the outline agreements that remain in place on the reserve to achieve these goals.

- Natural England/Beaulieu Estate shall issue annual, and day permits to visitors to Needs Ore, explaining site rules and providing a map of access routes. A dated and/or numbered permit should be on display in any vehicle using the site, which should only park at the 'shore hide' or adjacent to the boat club house.
- The cars of sailing club members should display a similar permit.
- All residents and staff to speak to drivers or report to site/estate staff any vehicle (other than those belonging to residents and/or guests) that do not display an appropriate permit.
- Needs Ore bird watching and sailing club permits should state that such visitors should respect the privacy of the residents and that no foot traffic is allowed the seaside in front of the cottages at any time, and speed limits to be adhered to along Warren lane to Needs ore point.
- If there is any specific activity of special interest to Natural England in these specified areas and outside of the nesting season, NE have only to inform the residents who will be more than happy to respond accordingly.

We restrict access to Warren Shore to allow the birds along the shingle and saltmarsh to have sanctuary from disturbance. The mouth of the Beaulieu River, also known as Gull Island, is included in this restriction, however, remains a sanctuary all year round. If you do see anyone entering these areas particularly during the nesting season (1st April – 31st August), we would urge you to contact the reserve and estate staff.

We will be carrying out a variety of survey and monitoring work through the spring/summer, and you may see us or our volunteers out and about. An important survey that is carried out around the reserve is the 'Wetland Bird Survey' (WeBS). The survey is carried out on one Sunday each month, coinciding with the highest tide (to make counting most accurate). Please see separate sheet for information and dates of the counts for near future.

I hope that these points and bits of information may help us all to have a positive spring and summer. We hope to get more information out to all involved and around the National Nature Reserve about goings on and good news, sightings and other interest points. If you would be interested in hearing bits of information from us, then please let me know. If you do ever see or hear anything on or around the reserve that you think may be of interest to us, then again, please get in touch.

Many thanks,

Adam Wells
Reserve Manager – North Solent NNR
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Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS)

The Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) monitors non-breeding waterbirds in the UK. The principal aims of WeBS are to identify population sizes, determine trends in numbers and distribution, and identify important sites for waterbirds.

We would appreciate if at all possible that land managers and users (including residents) of the site to try to keep disturbance during a 'WeBS weekend' to a minimum, to ensure we have an accurate count across the site. We will also be putting up a notice to all residents and visitors closer to each WeBS count to remind all around the site that it will be taking place.



Snipe

The survey tries to take in as much of the reserve around Warren and Park Farm as feasible, including the fields, sea walls, pools, saltmarsh and estuary/river. If the birds here are disturbed, as I'm sure you will have seen at times, there is the chance that they leave the site completely. Although temporarily, this will have huge impacts on the results of the survey as they will not be counted at all. We base a lot of the conservation decisions on data collected through this survey, and so we hope you can understand how important it is that we manage to carry out a complete and undisturbed survey as possible.

For more information on the Wetland Birds Survey – go to www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/webs

Dates for Needs Ore, Park Shore & Warren Farm 2022

(all dates are Sundays)

16th Jan, 20th Feb, 6th March, 3rd April, 15th May, 19th June, 17th July, 14th Aug, 11th Sept, 9th Oct
27th Nov, 11th Dec

Bird Sightings - Winter 2021/2022

Produced by Natural England Voluntary Wardens Ian Williamson and Chris Button. All photos taken on the reserve by Ian & Chris ©

December 2021 Round Up

The sea proved very productive during December and regular watching brought its rewards. It was a great month for Auks all along the South Coast and it was no exception here with both Razorbills and Guillemots being seen on numerous days. Some made it up the Beaulieu River and showed exceptionally well. The highest count of Razorbills was five on the 14th.



Razorbill

Other highlights on the sea included three Velvet Scoter on the 5th and a single Black-necked Grebe on both the 4th & 5th.



Black-necked Grebe

Slavonian Grebes reached their highest count of four at the latter end of the month. Up to fifteen Red-breasted Mergansers was an exceptional count while singles of Shag, Goosander and at least ten Eider were notable.



Eider

A 1st winter Purple Sandpiper graced the shore-line for much of the month often spending time with Turnstones. This cracking Winter visitor counted as only the second record for Needs Ore and may well stay here for most of the season.



Purple Sandpiper

Other wildfowl on the reserve included a female Scaup which spent most of its time on Blackwater with the occasional foray onto the estuary.



Scaup

Six Russian White-Fronted Geese arrived on the 20th but sadly did not stay. It has been a good Winter for these geese with pleasing numbers being reported across the country.



Russian White-fronted Geese

A Pale-bellied Brent goose was available for those who scanned carefully through the large Dark-Bellied Brent flock while six Barnacle Geese on the 21st were good candidates for wild migratory birds rather than the feral varieties.



Pale-bellied Brent Goose (left) with two Dark-bellied Brent Geese

Passerines were represented with several notable records including Hawfinch on the 14th, Brambling and up to three Dartford Warblers. The star bird of the month however was an elusive Lapland Bunting that was picked up on call on the 8th. This was only the 4th reserve record of this nationally scarce species.

Thrush numbers were boosted by large flocks of Redwing towards the latter part of the month but Fieldfare sightings were very low. Some of our more "resident" species which were available for much of the month included at least thirteen Avocet, two Marsh Harrier, up to fourteen Spoonbill and two Cattle Egret.



Cattle Egret



Peacock

The resident pair of Peregrines were joined on the reserve by a younger bird which seems to also have taken up territory. Other wildlife included an unseasonal Peacock Butterfly which was enjoying the Winter sun on the 26th while up to three Atlantic Grey Seals were observed in the estuary.



Atlantic Grey Seal

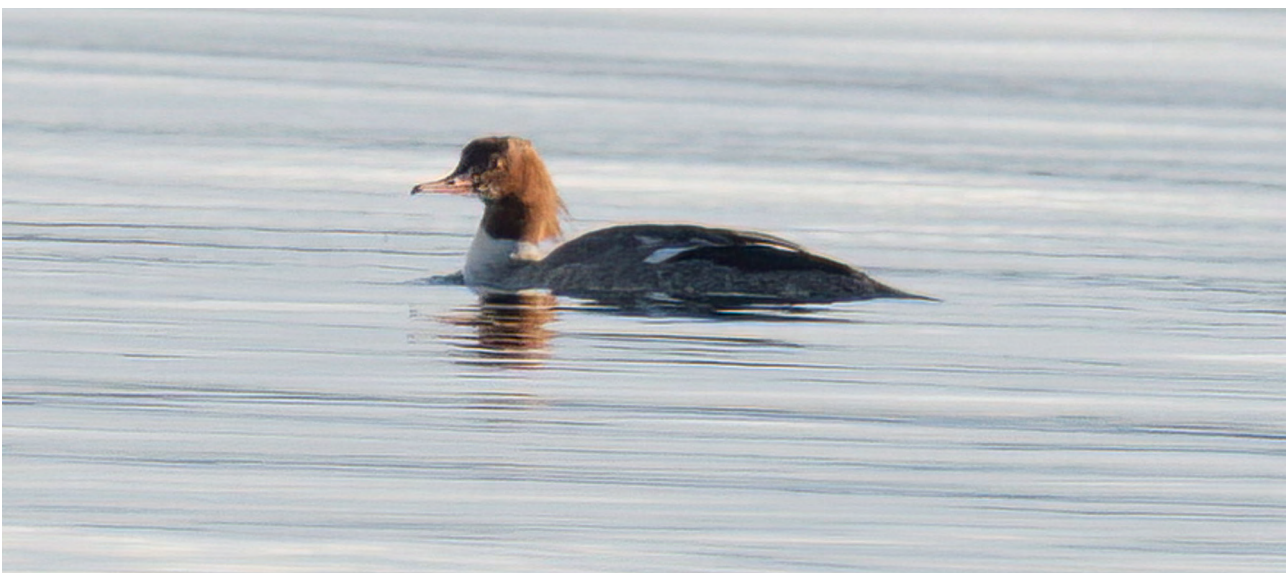
January 2022 Round Up

The year started very promisingly when just after dawn on the 1st three Glossy Ibis flew West over the reserve. There were several sightings later in the month of this scarce but increasing water bird. Perhaps a future breeder here?



Glossy Ibis

There were in fact almost 100 species noted on New Year's Day, an example of how rich and diverse the reserve is even in Winter! The Purple Sandpiper remained throughout the month along with the Scaup and decent numbers of Spoonbill. The Pale-bellied Brent Goose also remained while there were regular sighting of Goosander; not traditionally an easy species to get here.



Goosander



Hen Harrier

Notable sightings included seven Red-Throated Divers flying West on the 6th (a reserve record), a ring-tail Hen Harrier seen on several days, a Siberian Chiffchaff and 2 pairs of Mandarin Duck on the 27th.



Siberian Chiffchaff

Auk sightings continued on the sea & in the estuary although one Razorbill was reportedly dispatched by a seal! The young Peregrine remained on the estuary however the adult pair seems to have disappeared, hopefully they will return for the Spring.



Mandarin

As well as the Hen Harrier & Peregrine, birds of prey were also well represented with Marsh Harrier, Red Kite, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Common Buzzard, Sparrowhawk and the introduced White-Tailed Eagles. The latter often being sighted looking across from Inchmery and Lepe.



Tawny Owl

February 2022 Round Up

Despite some dramatic weather during the month there was plenty to see for those brave enough to venture out. Long-staying goodies including the Scaup, Pale-Bellied Brent, Purple Sandpiper & two Slavonian Grebes were available during February while two Marsh Harriers were noted on most days.



male Marsh Harrier

Up to nineteen Spoonbill were regularly seen though often asleep while a Great White Egret was observed on the 12th.



Great White Egret

A five year record count of Golden Plover (120) was also noted on the 12th along with fly-bys from Common Scoter & Great Northern Diver.



Golden Plover

Towards the latter end of the month, Spring started to feel like it was within reach with Buff-tailed Bumblebees & Red Admirals in evidence.



Red Admiral

Skylarks, Chaffinches & Chiffchaffs started singing while Great Spotted Woodpeckers could be heard "drumming". Wading birds such as Avocet, Ringed Plover & Oystercatchers were beginning to show territorial & pairing behaviour while large numbers of Teal had already started to depart the reserve destined for their breeding grounds in Scandinavia and northern Europe.



Ringed Plover

A ring-tail Hen Harrier and a Red Kite graced the reserve briefly while the final couple of days of February registered Sandwich Tern, the young Peregrine, and at least one Cattle Egret. A returning ringed Oystercatcher was also seen on the 28th February. This individual bird is now at least 25 years old.



25 year old Oystercatcher

WEBS NEWS

The Wetland Bird Survey Counts carried out by Dave, Adam, Ian & Chris during December, January & February averaged around 5000 birds during the monthly high-tide census. Notable counts were 926 Teal & 1066 Dunlin in the December count, 588 Wigeon & 275 Knot in the January count & 126 Mediterranean Gull, 1264 Brent Geese & 65 Black-Tailed Godwits in the February count.



Mediterranean Gull



Dunlin