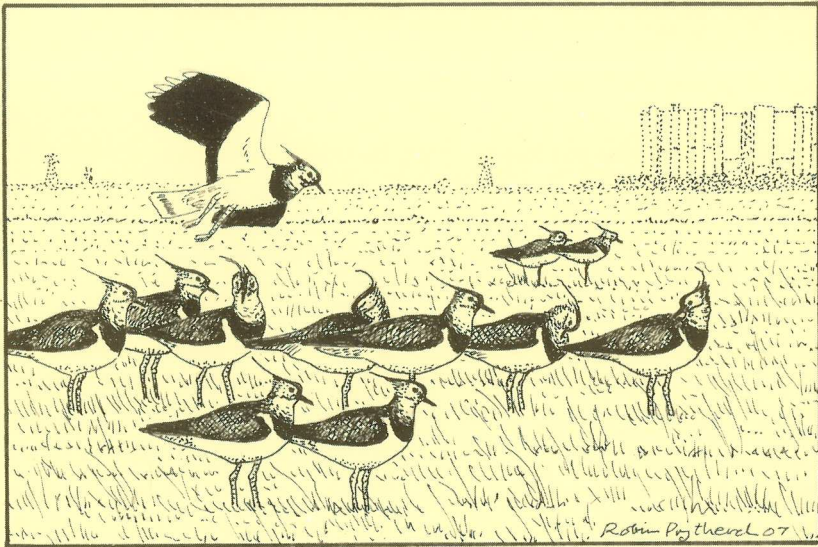


# BRISTOL ORNITHOLOGY

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRISTOL ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB



NUMBER 28, 2006

The Birds of Oldbury Power Station Silt Lagoons

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*A.J. Middleton,  
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# Preface

This issue is given over entirely to a paper by Andy Middleton, David Payne and the late Rae Vernon, all long term members of the Club. When Rae was ill he became largely restricted to home, so he set himself three tasks to complete: 1) a book on the birds of Morocco (see below), 2) a study of the Rook population of Avon (*Avon Bird Report* (2004) 147-156) and 3) the study of birds at Oldbury Power Station. Rae set about writing the first draft of the paper, but too ill to continue he passed the file to his co-authors Andy and David to polish up for publication. The appearance of this paper is timely as Oldbury Power Station is due to be decommissioned in the near future. Discussions are already taking place regarding the future of the site and this study should be helpful to those who are keen to see the development of a reserve there.

Rae was a widely experienced ornithologist who approached his projects in a thoroughly scientific way. He was involved in early gull and wader counts on the Severn Estuary, was an organiser of the 1975 B.T.O. Rook Survey and an author (with Michel Thévenot and Patrick Bergier) of *The Birds of Morocco: an annotated checklist* (B.O.U., 2004) which was voted by *British Birds* as one of the best bird books of 2005.

We were delighted to accept this paper - his last contribution to ornithology - and hope that Rae would have been happy with it in its final form.

Jane Cumming, Robin Prytherch and Lyndon Roberts  
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# The Birds of Oldbury Power Station Silt Lagoons

A.J. Middleton, D.H. Payne and J.D.R. Vernon

## Introduction

Oldbury Power Station (OPS), which has been operational since 1968, is located 1.6 km north of Oldbury-on-Severn in South Gloucestershire, approximately 5 km west of Thornbury, and about 24 km north of Bristol.

The site is situated on the east bank of the Severn Estuary, which is itself designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), but the actual lagoons are not included within the SSSI. This paper reviews observations made on birds recorded on the Oldbury Power Station Silt Lagoons, since they were excavated in the late 1970s and the surrounding areas. The power station uses water as a coolant and extracts this from the Severn Estuary. In order to keep an available supply, a tidal reservoir was constructed offshore and as part of the reservoir operations silt is pumped into a large settling lagoon on the landward side of the sea wall. As the first lagoon filled with silt, pumping ceased and a second lagoon was excavated for use. This in turn was filled and at present a third lagoon is now in use (see Fig.1).

The power station was initially the responsibility of the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB), but this was later privatised and taken over by Nuclear Electric plc., now Magnox Electric plc.

## The Site

All the records in the systematic list refer to records of birds observed from the three lagoons and adjacent areas in the study site described below, but also include the tidal reservoir and the small pool adjacent to Lagoon 3, excavated in recent years by Magnox Electric. Occasionally records from adjacent fields are included if they referred to birds suspected of using the lagoon areas as roosting sites or for feeding. Data quoted on the vegetation within the lagoon areas, is taken from ecological surveys carried out in summer 1987, October 1993 and March 1995 (Higgins 1995).

The study site is approximately 70 hectares in size, plus 154 hectares of riverbed, comprising the tidal reservoir. It surrounds but excludes the power station and land within the boundary fence, though occasionally reference to

birds roosting (e.g. Pied Wagtails<sup>1</sup>) or nesting (e.g. Kestrel) on the power station buildings are included.

Apart from the lagoons, the study area includes areas of scrubland, an area of native trees and shrubs planted between 1988 and 1992, hedgerows and grassland meadow, an old cider orchard, and also two small ponds. Within the study area, Magnox Electric have devised Nature Trails for the public to use and to give an introduction to the wildlife around the power station. The trail passes through the main habitats and along the edge of Lagoon No.2 and the sea wall. Access to the other lagoons is, however, restricted.

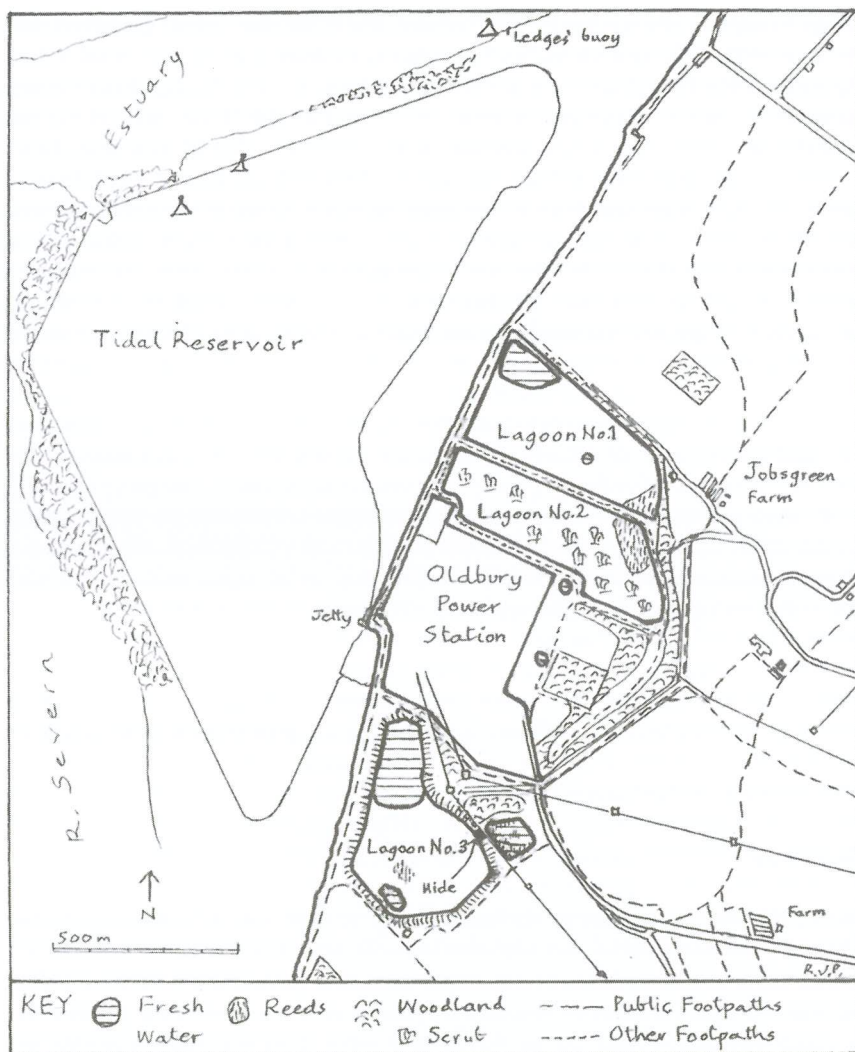
Silt Lagoon No.1 was operated from late 1975 until mid-1983. When operational, it attracted large numbers of waders to a high tide roost along with smaller numbers of duck. Little Ringed Plover bred on the site in 1983. However, once pumping ceased in 1983, birds stopped using the area and the lagoon was reseeded for return to agricultural use. Initially the long grass (mainly Perennial Ryegrass, *Lolium perenne*) soon supported large numbers of rodents, which in turn attracted in Short-eared Owls to feed over the area. In the northern corner of the lagoon, an area of tall salt marsh vegetation persisted, and included some shallow pools. By the late 1980s, this area flooded regularly each winter, with the pool margins supporting a mixture of saltmarsh plants, though progressively drying out in the summer and early autumn. Some waders occur there in small numbers during migration, especially Dunlin.

At the southern end, a much smaller area supported tall wetland vegetation, with plant species characteristic of both fresh and brackish water. This area attracted smaller numbers of birds, but Snipe winter there and Reed Bunting breed. Today this area has been completely colonised by Curled Dock *Rumex crispus*. It often floods in the winter and duck, mainly Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler and Shelduck increasingly used the area for feeding in winter and reached higher numbers than when the lagoon was operational. The dock seed, which must be present in large amounts, must form an important source of food for the wintering wildfowl there. When water levels were at their highest, small numbers of diving duck, mainly Tufted Duck, Pochard and Goldeneye were attracted in. In the autumn and winter months, large numbers of Meadow Pipits and Pied Wagtails feed around the water edge. Meadow Pipits breed there and Lapwings also did up to 1998, with unsuccessful attempts since.

Silt Lagoon No.2 was first commissioned in mid-1983 and remained operational until early 1994. For the first three years 1984-87, though a wader roost was established, numbers were at first relatively small compared to those that had used Lagoon No.1. However, numbers gradually increased and towards the end of its operational life it was attracting large numbers of waders at the high tide roost, especially Ringed Plover and Dunlin. Though most birds used the roost as a resting area at high tide, some continued to feed on invertebrates present in the silt. In the mid-1980s, large numbers of Curlew used the area for

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<sup>1</sup> Scientific names of bird species are given in the Species Accounts



**Fig.1** Map of Oldbury Power Station Silt Lagoons, Tidal Reservoir and Surrounds

roosting, though only intermittently, as other alternative roost sites on the northern shore of the estuary were favoured at times.

Waders continued to use the lagoon in dwindling numbers up to 1994, when pumping stopped, after which the area was colonised by common marshland plants and eventually developed into coarse grassland. Small pools continued to exist at the southern end for a while and these attracted Common Snipe and

Green Sandpiper during the 1994/95 winter. By 2000, the coarse grassland had been invaded with various herbaceous plants, including groups of Wild Teasle *Dipsacus fullonium*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Curled Dock, Wild Parsnip *Pastinacea sativa*, Ragwort *Senecio* sp., Melilot *Melilotus* sp., Rose-Bay Willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*, and a small amount of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and willow *Salix* sp. scrub. This rich growth of seed bearing plants, attracts large numbers of seed-eating birds, notably Linnet, Chaffinch and Stock Dove. The wetter areas near the outfall have been colonised by Curled Dock and attract Mallard and Snipe in winter. At the north end there is a rapidly expanding reed bed, 0.5 hectares in size, which attracts in Common Snipe, Jack Snipe and especially Water Rail in winter. Reed Warbler breed in increasing numbers in summer with Sky Lark and Reed Bunting nesting in the grassy areas.

Silt Lagoon No.3 was created in 1994. As the silt levels built up, a new high tide gull/wader roost developed. Waders are mainly Dunlin and Lapwing, but smaller numbers of other species do occur at times. Magnox Electric established a hide on the eastern edge of the lagoon, from where wader counts can be made in some comfort. The silt covers most of the area; some water is retained at one end of the lagoon, but as pumping is irregular, this is often very low and sometimes dries up completely. When pumping operations are in full swing (especially in spring and autumn) wildfowl in increasing numbers are attracted in. The SE corner has been colonised by reeds and some grassland also occurs. Behind the hide is a small pool, created by Magnox Electric, which attracts small numbers of wildfowl. Just outside the power station boundary on the edge of the estuary there is a stretch of saltmarsh c.18m wide which attracts some wildfowl to feed along its edge.

## Methods

Since 1979, frequent visits to the site, mostly at high tide to obtain maximum numbers of shore birds (at the high tide roosts), have been made at least once a month, but often more frequently. Counts were first carried out by Trevor Evans and Rae Vernon, between 1979 and 1984, and then continued to the present day by Andy Middleton and David Payne and other bird watchers. Records are given up to the end of 2005.

A total of 199 species have been recorded from 1979 to the end of 2005, with 124 non-passerine species and 75 passerines. Of the non-passerines there were 29 species of wildfowl, 34 species of waders and 20 species of skuas, gulls and terns.

*Seabirds.* Large numbers of seabirds pass up the Severn Estuary, often storm-driven by westerly gales. Since the construction of the second Severn Bridge crossing in 1996, pelagic storm-driven species now rarely venture further up river (Lancastle 2001), though a few still do e.g. Gannets and the occasional

Storm Petrel. Gulls, notably Black-headed Gull are common passage migrants and winter visitors and under certain weather conditions (e.g. after westerly gales in spring) good numbers of terns occur on passage. North of the two Severn bridges, wildfowl concentrate on their managed habitats at the Wetlands Trust (formerly The Wildfowl Trust) at Slimbridge, but since 1979, the Oldbury lagoons have provided additional feeding habitats for many species. Waders are less abundant above the two Severn bridges, but the lagoons have provided both an important new roosting area for species feeding on the estuarine mud and a stop-over for many species on migration. Seabirds on the Severn Estuary below the Severn Bridge have been well described by Lancaster (2001) and others. There is a paucity of seabird records from the study site. Part of the reason for this may be that there is no suitable shelter from which to watch during the most favourable conditions such as gale force winds and lashing rain.

*Other non-passerines.* Breeding non-passerines are few in number. Shelduck are known to nest in pollard willow close to, but not within the study site, but some Mallard and Tufted Duck nest on the small pool adjacent to Lagoon No.3, together with a small number of Coot and Moorhen. A pair of Little Ringed Plover nested on Lagoon No.1, in 1983. A pair of Oystercatcher has attempted to nest on several occasions and five to six pairs of Lapwing have nested in suitable wet habitat adjacent to the filled-in Lagoon No.1. A pair of Kestrels nest regularly on the power station buildings and a pair of Peregrine Falcons has attempted to breed in some years. Mute Swan and Canada Goose have reared young in the last two years.

*Passerines.* Of the 73 passerine species, many are migrant species passing by on spring and autumn passage, notably Wheatear, Yellow Wagtail, Whinchat, hirundines, and Meadow Pipits. Others are winter visitors, notably Fieldfare and Redwing in variable numbers and various finches feeding on the abundant seed present on the filled-in Lagoon No.2. Resident passerine species present are typical of those occurring elsewhere on the alluvial low ground bordering the estuary. These include Sky Lark, Meadow Pipit, Reed Bunting in the dykes and formerly a few pairs of Tree Sparrow. Migrant Reed Warblers breed in the reedbed on the north edge of Lagoon No.2.

*The future of the site.* The future of the lagoons is very much in doubt, as the power station is to be decommissioned in the near future. Plans are, at present, to close the station in 2008, though it is possible that may be postponed for a few years. Once pumping of water ceases in Lagoon No.3, vegetation will soon encroach into the area which will no longer attract waders and gulls into the high tide roost. The area is likely to go the same way as Lagoon No 2, but it could still be an important feeding habitat, especially for wintering finches and some species like Common Snipe which may be attracted to wettish or marshy areas remaining.



Alternately, it may be reseeded and revert to farmland, as in the case of Lagoon No.1. Hollows may retain floodwater during the winter months, which could still attract in some wildfowl. With the co-operation of the future owner of the site, some agreed management of the area (in conjunction with the Avon Wildlife Trust) could provide a variety of habitats to attract a range of species. But it is unlikely to be a practical proposition to keep a large area clear of vegetation in Lagoon No.3 to maintain a high tide roost any longer.

## Species Accounts

The systematic list is given below. It details all species recorded on the study site from 1979 to 2005 inclusive. The sequence follows the recent recommendations of the Taxonomic Sub-committee of the BOU Records Committee (*Ibis* (2002) 144:707-710), including more recent taxonomic changes detailed by Collinson (2006). Actual bird names follow those of the *British Birds* list of Western Palearctic Birds. Most of the records come from the authors own counts and those collated by Trevor Evans and Anthony Merritt, but many other observers have contributed records over the years. Other sources of data have been the *Bristol* and later *Avon Bird Reports* and from the Bristol Ornithological Club's *Bird News*.

**MUTE SWAN** *Cygnus olor* First recorded 25 July 1982, when two adults flew up river, with up to three immature birds on the lagoons from November to the end of the year, then up to four immature birds to the end of March 1983. Some were present throughout the rest of that year increasing to a peak of 15 birds at the end of May, but up to eight birds remained to the end of December. Has since become more regular. Bred in 2002, but the female (previously ringed at Slimbridge, 21 March 2000) was killed by a Fox *Vulpes vulpes* in April and six cygnets were found dead in July.

**BEWICK'S SWAN** *Cygnus columbianus* Some 22 records of birds mostly passing offshore, but some occur on the lagoons. The first birds were a herd of 14 offshore on 2 February and four on 13 November 1983, with two on 5 February 1984. No further records until 1990, when 14 flew up river on 21 October with one juvenile. Then three down river, again with a juvenile on 23 November 1991. Another bird flying up river on 23 December 1992. Then a single on 13 February 1994 and two in December 1996. The next record was in 1997 with nine birds on 21 December. Then singles on 9 January and 25 December 1998. Five records in 2000, all flying up river: a single on 23 January; two on 19 November; two on 19 December, three on 27th and two on 31st. Eight (including two juveniles) on 15 December and ten up river on 16 December 2001. There were seven birds flying down river on 18 December 2002 and finally four seen in December 2003 and January 2004. Two were seen flying up river in November 2005.

WHOOPEER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus* Two records only: one on one of the silt lagoons on 29 October 1983 (T.G.Evans) and another flying to NE on 23 December 2000 (A .J. Middleton & D.H. Payne).

BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis* This is a rare visitor to the Avon area. One on 1 March 1998 on Lagoon No.3, later flew down river. This was the only record here and only the sixth for Avon. The description suggested that the bird belonged to the nominate race *A. f. fabalis* (Taiga Bean Goose) (D.H. & L.Payne).

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons* At least 17 autumn/winter records since 1981. 55 in flight on 13 December 1981 was the first and highest number recorded. Since then, numbers generally have been much smaller with one to seven birds recorded between 19 October and January to 13 February. But 34 were recorded on 19 December 1999 and 26 on 1 January 2000. Five were in fields south of Lagoon No.3 in February 2006 and grazed on the seaweed, south of the high tide reservoir, at low tide. Most birds though are seen flying offshore up or down river. These birds are probably wanderers from the flocks wintering at Slimbridge.

GREYLAG GOOSE *Anser anser* Twelve records only: seven offshore flying to NW on 8 April 1995; two on 23 March and two in April and December 1996; a single on 1 February and five on 8 October 1998; a single on 17 May 2000 and nine on 15 August 2001. A pair from March to July 2002 with two in November and December and one on 17 June 2003. Finally, two in December 2004. These records probably all apply to free-flying feral birds, originating from the large flock which resides in the Slimbridge/Frampton area of Gloucestershire.

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis* Nine records: a single bird on Lagoon No.2 on 12 February 1984; eleven on 21 September 1993; two on 26 April 1995; a single on 28 April 1997; a single on 22 Apr 2000; two on 23 April and between 1 and 23 May 2001; two on 2nd and 10 March 2002. These probably relate to birds from Frampton on Severn gravel pits. Became more common through 2003 and 2005 culminating in a first breeding attempt on the pool behind Lagoon No.3 in 2005 when two young were fledged from a brood of three.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* One was present on Lagoon No.2 on 6 May 1993. Another was present on 2nd and 3 April 1995. Thirteen were present in April 1999. It is difficult to know whether these are genuinely wild birds, or whether they originate from collections.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* There have been only six records - three on 29 October 1989, eight on 14 October and eleven on 15 December 1990, and

singles on 2 March 1991, and 10/11 October 1992. Then no other records until one single bird on 8 December 2002. All records refer to the Dark-bellied race *B.b.bernicla*.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE *Alopochen aegyptiaca* One recorded on 12 February 2002 (A. J. Middleton) and one on 4 March 2006 (P. Hazelwood).

COMMON SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna* The species is a common breeder in the Severn estuary area, often nesting in pollarded willows close to the river. The Oldbury area is no exception. Some birds are present on the lagoons throughout the year and several broods of young are generally present during the summer months.

**Table 1** Maximum monthly counts of Common Shelduck, 1979-2005.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
86	70	96	109	160	218	63	32	36	30	34	56

Numbers are at their lowest in August and September, as the majority of birds have left the area for their moulting grounds off the German North Sea coast. Northerly movements up river, especially in the evening, have been observed on a number of occasions. Return from the moulting areas is signalled by the appearance of a few adults in October. Numbers remain fairly small but begin increasing from December onwards and reach a peak in late spring (May/June) and then gradually decline as they leave again to the summer moulting grounds. The first broods appear on the lagoons in mid-June (earliest 14 June) with latest brood on 16 August (in 1980). It is difficult to estimate the number of breeding pairs that occur each summer on the lagoon with broods, but counts would suggest no more than three or four pairs in most years. Numbers of ducklings recorded vary from season to season. A maximum of 30 ducklings was recorded in 1979 with 28 in 1980, 27 in 1998 and 24 in 1995, but in some years there are often half this number. This seems to be indicating an ongoing decline.

MANDARIN DUCK *Aix galericulata* At least six records. The first were in 1995 when one was present from the end of August to early September then two on 11 September. In 1996 there was a female or immature on the tidal reservoir on 28 August, another on 11 September with two from 14th to 18 September. A male in eclipse plumage was present from 28th to 31 August 1997. Another male was noted on 4 November 2000. These birds probably originate from the small feral population at Tortworth Lake or from the larger number resident on ponds in the Forest of Dean.

EURASIAN WIGEON *Anas penelope* Though seen regularly on the salt marshes of the River Severn, it was at first rarely seen on the lagoons. A single bird was present in October 1983 but, after Lagoon No.1 was filled in, they started to feed on the flood waters which were created along its southern edge. The plentiful supply of seed there, especially Docks *Rumex* sp. attracts large numbers of Wigeon and other wildfowl during the winter months from September through to March and occasionally into April or early May. Maximum counts of 1,580 birds occurred in December 1995 and 700 in January 1996, but most years maximum numbers are in the region of 300-350 birds at mid-winter.

**Table 2** Maximum monthly counts of Eurasian Wigeon, 1979-2005 (excluding the 1995/96 counts).

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
371	553	190	38	6	-	-	1	110	145	179	285

GADWALL *Anas strepera* First recorded in 1982 with two on 5 December. Since then, six records in 1983 and 1984 between 4 October and February and ten records since, between 5 August and 18 May. Mostly two to five birds, but eight on 10 May 1996 and thirteen on 20 November 1983.

EURASIAN TEAL *Anas crecca* Small numbers at first with two or three birds recorded during the 1978/79 and 1979/80 winters, but up to 20 birds in the following two winter periods. In the 1982/1983 winter, as feeding conditions improved in Lagoon No.1 with a reduction in the water levels, numbers increased to a maximum of some 50 birds with up to 124 birds in October 1983. With the closure of Lagoon No.1 and rising water levels on Lagoon No.2, there were few records of the species until the early 1990s when the flood waters on the south edge of the lagoon became an attractive feeding area. As in the case of Wigeon, numbers peaked in December 1995 when there was a count of 800 birds with 1,000 recorded in January 1996. Maximum mid-winter counts 1997 to 1999 were in the region of 300-360, but further high numbers occurred in 2000 and 2001 with maximum counts of 900 in January and 700 in December 2000 with 670 in January 2001. Most occur between August and April, but occasionally in late July (maximum of six) and a few late birds into May or June (maximum of 20 in June 1995).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL *Anas carolinensis* A male was observed between 4th and 13 January 2001 (M. Warren *et al.*). This was the tenth record of this rare Nearctic vagrant for the Avon area, and only the second on the coast.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* A regular visitor to the lagoons throughout the year. Now breeds regularly in small numbers on the pool adjacent to Lagoon

No.3. Numbers recorded during the first six years of observation were generally low with a maximum of 32 birds in August 1982 and a maximum of 18 birds mid-winter. Mid-winter counts now reach over 200-250 birds, with highest numbers in autumn coinciding with pumping operations in Lagoon No.3.

**Table 3** Maximum monthly counts of Mallard, 1979-2005.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
238	132	63	54	75	119	165	236	425	311	306	263

**PINTAIL** *Anas acuta* Uncommon winter visitor August to March, occasionally into April. Usually one to seven birds, but 15 recorded in January 1985 and September 1999. First records were of a single bird in January 1981 and singles in January and March 1983. Then 15 recorded in January 1985 followed by a male on 10 February 1991 and 27 Feb 1993, and a pair 6th to 24 March. More regularly recorded since 1994.

**GARGANEY** *Anas querquedula* Four records only: two on 9 August 1983 and single males on 5 May 2000, 10 August 2001 and from 5th to 16 April 2005.

**SHOVELER** *Anas clypeata* Regular winter visitor from late July to April with odd birds occasionally into May. Recorded between October 1980 to January 1984, but as with other species of duck, few were recorded before 1994 after which feeding conditions improved.

**Table 4** Maximum monthly counts of Shoveler, 1979-2005.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
26	28	24	28	1	-	3	14	25	30	26	22

**COMMON POCHARD** *Aythya farina* First recorded in 1981 when 26 were present on Lagoon No.1 on 8 March which presumably were passage birds. Then three were present November 1982 with a maximum of 14 during September 1983 to February 1984. Then noticeably absent until 1994. Small numbers (one to 10 birds) between late July to April from 1994 to 1997. When there is sufficient depth of water along the south edge of Lagoon No.3 in winter, higher numbers are attracted in, as in the 1998/99 winter, when maximum numbers reached 50 between January and March 1999. Not recorded since December 2002 because of shallow water in lagoons.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** *Aythya collaris* One record of this rare Nearctic vagrant. An adult male was seen on the small pool by Lagoon No.3 from 13 April to 4 May 2000 (M. Warren *et al.*). A photograph taken by I. Leach appears on the front cover of the *Avon Bird Report* for 2000.

**TUFTED DUCK** *Aythya fuligula* The first records of this species were of single birds in April 1981 and in August 1982. More regular in 1983 on Lagoon No.2 with four in February and a maximum of 16 from July to February 1984. Since 1994, it has become a regular winter visitor in small numbers, when water levels have been high enough on Lagoon No.1. A few have been present throughout the year on the small pool by Lagoon No.3 since 1998, when a pair first nested. A female with five young appeared on Lagoon No.3, but only two survived. Then three broods were produced in 2000, but only one survived. Tufted Duck did not breed in 2001, but four young were hatched in 2002, two surviving. Two young were present in 2003, of which one survived. The young are often taken by Lesser Black-backed Gulls. In 2004 15 ducklings were present from three broods, but two weeks later there were only three left.

**COMMON EIDER** *Somateria mollissima* Only two records: 18 (including 5 adult males) were seen flying down river on 31 October 1993 with five flying up river on 26 June 1994. There are many records from the Severn Beach area, but it has been noted that the species shows obvious reluctance to pass beyond the second Severn bridge.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** *Clangula hyemalis* Five records. First recorded in 1982 when an immature male was present from 16 October to 7 November. Then no records until 1998 when a male in summer plumage flew over Lagoon No. 3 on 14 May, and a female was present on 30 December which remained until 9 May 1999. Another female was present on 3 November 2000; she remained until 3 December. Finally a single duck was also present in early January 2001.

**COMMON SCOTER** *Melanitta nigra* Only six records: a male on 20th and 27 September 1992; a female on 29 March 1996 (possibly an oiled bird); a pair on 15 February 1997; another male on 13 January 2001; a juvenile on 24 August 2002 and a juvenile in June 2003.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** *Bucephala clangula* Rare winter visitor. Mainly one to three birds recorded, if water levels are sufficiently high on the lagoons. A maximum of seven birds in January 1983, but since 1994 only one or two birds between October and March in some years.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** *Mergus serrator* Six records, mostly of birds passing offshore: three in flight on 22 October 1995; a male to SW on 13 January 1996; a redhead on 1/2 November 1997 on Lagoon No.3; another down river on 30 Oct 1998; a redhead on Lagoon No.3 on 3rd and 8 January 1999, and three, including two males, flying to SW on 8 October 2000.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser* Three records of passing birds: three, including one male, flew to SE on 17 February; seven flying up river on 4 January 1997 and another in November 2003. A very scarce species on the Severn Estuary.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis* Three records: two were present on Lagoon No.2 on 19 February and one on 3 March 1984; two were on the tidal reservoir on 10 February 1991.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE *Alectoris rufa* One on the site between June and September 1989 and also during the nesting period in 1990. Then two on 14 March 1998.

GREY PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix* Three records only. One on 28 April 1994, one on 23 March and one heard on 9 November 2000.

COMMON PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus* A few pairs breed within the study area. Present all year round.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Gavia immer* Only one record: one flew to SW (down river), 13 December 2000 (M. Warren).

LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis* First recorded on Lagoon No.2 in July 1983, with two or three birds from the end of August to early September and a single bird to 1 February 1984, then a single bird on 1 December 1984 and 1 January 1985. Then no further records until January 1994. Since then one or two birds have been recorded each year in most months until 2002. Not recorded at all in 2003. Recorded again in 2004 and 2005 with a group of five in August. In 1994 breeding was recorded with two broods totalling five young. Though one or two birds were recorded throughout 1995 breeding was not again proved until 1996 when two young were seen.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus* This species is rarely recorded on the Severn Estuary though occasionally it is seen at Aust and Chittingen. Seven records: one first-year bird on Lagoon No.2 from 12th to 17 August 1984; one on 10 February 1991; another on the tidal reservoir on 30 April 1995 and a juvenile on Lagoon No.3 from 7th to 20 June 1998. Most recently noted in June 2004. Offshore, three down river during SW gales on 13 Dec and three on the tidal reservoir on 30 December 2000, with one on 28 October 2001.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus* One on Lagoon No.3 on 4 December 1998 (D.H. Payne).

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*. Two records: one moulting adult on Lagoon No. 3 on 31 August 1997 (D.H. Payne) and another on 4 April 1999.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus* An uncommon storm-driven summer/autumn visitor to Avon waters, but rarely recorded north of the old Severn Bridge. Two records offshore: single on 10 September 1994 and two on 21 September 1997 were seen during very calm weather.

EUROPEAN STORM-PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus* Another storm-driven migrant, more commonly recorded on the estuary just south of the second Severn bridge. Only two records: a single bird in flight over Lagoon No.2 on 9 September 1990 (many observers) and a corpse found on 17 February 2002 (which had probably been dead for some two weeks) (D.H. Payne).

NORTHERN GANNET *Morus bassanus* A scarce storm-driven visitor. Three records: one offshore on 6 September 1983; a dead adult on Lagoon No.3 on 8 July 1997 and another on 7 November 2000.

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* Small numbers have been regularly recorded throughout the year since 1979. A few occasionally occur in the lagoon area, if water levels are sufficiently high, and on the small pool behind Lagoon No.3, but the majority of records concern birds roosting at high tide on a series of navigation lights. Smallest numbers occur in mid-summer, but numbers increase from late July, with maximum numbers (25-34 birds in total) in August and September. By November, numbers have declined, with a maximum of ten recorded during the main winter months and into the early spring. Actual numbers roosting is limited by the few buoys and perches present. The highest count of 34 was recorded in Sept 1990.

*Table 5 Average total per month of Great Cormorant, 1979-2005.*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av./month	7	6	6	4	5	5	15	19	19	15	10	8

The birds no doubt feed on the estuary and probably originate from the colonies on Steep Holm and on Denny Island (Monmouthshire). It is also possible that some wintering birds may come from further afield as colour ringed birds from a colony on St Margaret's Isle, near Tenby, Pembrokeshire, have been observed on the estuary at New Passage and elsewhere in Avon.

EURASIAN BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris* One was flushed from the edge of Lagoon No.2 near the reed bed on 12 January 1997 (D.H. Payne).



**LITTLE EGRET** *Egretta garzetta* First recorded in 1993 when a single bird was seen on 23 July and two on 18 August. In 1996 singles were seen on Lagoon No.3 on 10th and 15 August and 8 December. Then in 1999 one was present between 30 August and 19 September, being joined by a second bird on 5 September. In 2000 there were singles present in August (the earliest on 19 August), on 10 September and on various dates from 24 November to 22 December. One was seen flying up river on 2 December 2001. Also singles were noted 3 July and 2 December 2003. These records reflect the continuing influx of Little Egrets to Britain since the mid 1980s.

**GREY HERON** *Ardea cinerea* A regular visitor in varying numbers feeding or resting at high tide on the lagoons. Most probably feed on the estuary or in adjacent rhynes. The nearest heronry is on the river Wye near Chepstow, but there is no evidence that birds seen at OPS originate from there. Numbers are few between March and June, but rise in July after the breeding period with counts of 15-22 birds not uncommon through the autumn and winter. Numbers were highest in the period between 1988 and 1995, but this may be a reflection of higher water levels in the lagoons during that period.

**Table 6** Average total per month of Grey Heron, 1979-2005.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av./month	8	5	4	2	2	3	6	8	9	8	9	9

**MARSH HARRIER** *Circus aeruginosus* There are two spring sightings of this species. A female was heading N on 1 May 1983 (D.H. Payne), another flew SW down channel on 23 April 1995 (I.Barton & K.Rosewarne).

**NORTHERN GOSHAWK** *Accipiter gentilis* Only two records: one flew W across river on 26 March 1999 (D.H. Payne) and one female was soaring over fields heading N towards Shepperdine on 28 February 2004 (A.J. Middleton).

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter nisus* One or two birds regularly seen in the area throughout the year and bred in the maturing woodland in 2005.

**COMMON BUZZARD** *Buteo buteo* Regularly recorded over the area throughout the year, usually one to four birds. Formerly uncommon until the mid 1990s, but now fairly common. A breeding resident in adjacent areas.

**OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus* Two records: a single was present for about ten minutes on 31 Aug 2001. It hovered at a height of c.30m over the tidal lagoon and made an abortive dive before heading to NE (D.H. Payne). In similar fashion in April 2005 an adult hovered briefly over the tidal lagoon before heading on northward.

**COMMON KESTREL** *Falco tinnunculus* A resident pair, probably nesting most years on the power station buildings. One to four birds regularly seen throughout the year, with up to seven birds during July and August. Headless corpses found in late April and again in November 2003 were believed to have been killed by a Peregrine Falcon.

**MERLIN** *Falco columbarius* An uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor to the Severn Estuary area. There were no records before the autumn of 1989. Since then at least one bird, usually a female or immature, has been seen annually during the autumn/winter period, mostly from the first week of October to the end of February. Two records in August (14 August 1992 and 29 August 2001) and two in September (10 September 1990 and two birds flying S on 25 Sept 1994). Two late birds in spring on 29 April 1998 (a male) and one on 4 May 2000. A corpse found in November 2002 was also the victim of a Peregrine Falcon.

**HOBBY** *Falco subbuteo* Single birds recorded on 8 September 1990, 13 June and 24 August 1994. Since then one or two birds have been regularly recorded in most years between May and September, feeding over the lagoons, suggesting that nesting is likely to have occurred somewhere in the locality.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** *Falco peregrinus* First recorded in January 1982, followed by males on 8 May 1983 and 11 July 1984. Then singles on 16 February 1985, 4 January and 10th to 16th and 29 August 1986, 14 August 1988 (an immature). One on 7/8 January with two on 12 February 1989. Since then one or two birds have been regularly present in the area attracted to high wader numbers either on the adjacent mud flats on the estuary or at the high tide roost on the lagoons. Recorded in 1990 on four dates between 5 January and 17 February and on ten dates between 1 August and 7 December (including a juvenile in August). Noted on 23 February and on ten dates between 2 August and 15 November in 1992. In 1993 on 7 February and four dates in May and on 29 June and eleven dates from 17 July to 19 November (a male and female on latter date). In 1994 and 1995, a pair was present throughout most of the period. Mating was observed in 1994, but failure to breed was due to absence of a suitable nesting platform. A platform was erected in March 1995, but though a pair was present in April, no breeding was attempted, or in 1996. Few birds in fact were seen during the early part of 1996, but one to two birds were regularly recorded from July to the end of the year and again for most months in 1997 to 2005. Peregrine Falcons like to perch up on the many electricity pylons in the vicinity of the power station and with careful searching can often be found.

**WATER RAIL** *Rallus aquaticus* Since 1994 one to three birds have been regularly recorded most winters between October and March (once in April) with a maximum of five birds in December 2000 in the reed bed of Lagoon No.2.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus* Singles on 21st and 27 August 1983, then none until 1994 when ten were present during December. Breeding was proved in 1995; an adult with three young on 23 June and two small young on 26 August. Birds were present throughout that year (maximum of 12 in September). Breeds in most years on the small ponds.

COMMON COOT *Fulica atra* Singles on 24 December 1983 and 19 February 1984. Then an absence until 1994 when one pair bred (hatching two broods) and again in 2000 and 2001 with two pairs in 2002 and thereafter. One to six birds were present in most years between March and October and into December. These are presumably birds which have nested, mostly on the small pond by Lagoon No. 3.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralagus* Recorded all months of the year in small numbers. Usually one to six birds, with maxima of 15 in March 1998 and ten April 1991. A pair has attempted to nest in some years (e.g. in 1984 and 1989).

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus* One seen flying down river 17 May 1997 (A.J. Middleton). A very rare vagrant; only the second record for Avon.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta* This species has been recorded at least six times. The first was of three birds on Lagoon No.1 on 27 February 1982 then singles between 16 Dec 1990 and 6 January 1991 and on 14 Oct 1992. One on 9 December 1994 then three the next day until 12 December. Singles from 7th to 15 August 1999 and on 14 May 2000.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius* A pair bred on Lagoon No.2 in 1983 fledging three young. A pair was also present in April/May 1984, but no nesting occurred, probably because of the flooding of the area. A pair was seen displaying on 24 May 1993, but there was no evidence that they remained to nest. Otherwise the species is a rare spring and autumn migrant, usually one to seven birds April/May and between 22 July to 20 August.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula* A common migrant and winter visitor. Highest counts are recorded during autumn migration from mid-June to mid-October, with peak numbers usually in August to early September. In contrast, the spring migration during April and May is less evident. High numbers do occasionally occur in late May in some years, as in 1990. Numbers wintering are small, usually well below 50.

**Table 7** Average and maximum monthly counts of Ringed Plover, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	16	18	9	9	28	2	27	328	195	37	27	18
Max. monthly	70	50	26	60	160	18	350	740	420	125	90	60
Max. year	1979	1981	1984	1984	1990	1985	1990	1990	1988	1989	1989	1992

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus* One record of a single on 16 August 1993 on Lagoon No.2 (K.E. Vinicombe, R. Hunt *et al.*). This was the first for the Avon area since 1984, when one was seen at the Blackstone Rocks, Clevedon Bay (Rose, 1992).

EUROPEAN GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria* Not recorded until the early 1990s. Now an uncommon autumn migrant and winter visitor in small numbers. Maximum of 48 in August and 65 in September 1991. In winter maximum counts can reach around 40 (in 1997 & 1999) on the lagoon areas in Lapwing flocks, but they are recorded more commonly in ones and twos.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola* Passage migrant and winter visitor in small numbers, usually one to six birds with notably higher numbers of birds recorded during spring and autumn passage. The largest counts were of 30 birds in April 1994 and 75 in September 1993.

**Table 8** Maximum numbers of Grey Plover recorded per month, 1979-2005.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Max. count	9	4	12	30	46	6	1	6	75	49	32	6

NORTHERN LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* Present only in very small numbers during the first four years of recording, in the periods June to August, November/December and February. Usually one to nine birds only, with a maximum of 18 in December 1981. First post-breeding flocks started to use the high tide roost in July 1983 when 100 birds were recorded with 80 there the following year. Numbers remained low until 1994/95, since when they have increased dramatically and now large flocks are present throughout the autumn/winter period.

**Table 9** Average and maximum monthly counts of Northern Lapwing, 1994-2001.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	970	678	33	12	12	24	33	31	47	230	637	1130
Max. monthly	2900	2500	93	21	20	61	100	86	200	410	1180	3000

Since 1989 one to eight pairs have also bred, mostly in wet areas on Lagoon No. 1, but have numbers have recently declined. None have been successful since 1998, due partly to predation by Foxes and Carrion Crows. The area too has become much drier and thus less attractive to nesting pairs.

**RED KNOT** *Calidrus canutus* A spring and autumn migrant in small numbers, usually from one to 25 birds, but 33 on 12 August 1990, 50 in May 1993, then 63 in August, 45 in September and 80 in February 1994.

**SANDERLING** *Calidris alba* Only small numbers (one to ten birds) recorded on both spring and autumn passage, with two records of single birds in winter on 1 January 1997 and in November 2003. Some 40 birds in total recorded.

**SEMPALMATED SANDPIPER** *Calidris pusilla* One record of this vagrant: a single bird 12-14 August 1990 (Vinicombe 1991).

**LITTLE STINT** *Calidris minuta* An uncommon autumn passage migrant between late July and early November. Mostly one to 12 birds, with maximum of 22 recorded in September 1996. Also one record in winter (17 November 1994) and a single spring migrant (26 May 1991).

**TEMMINCK'S STINT** *Calidris temminckii* An adult in summer plumage was present on 29 April 1984 (L.A.Tucker & K.E.Vinicombe). This was only the thirteenth record for the Avon area and the first spring record.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** *Calidris melanotos* One record of this transatlantic migrant: a single bird on 17 September 1989 (K.E. Vinicombe).

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** *Calidris ferruginea* An autumn passage migrant in small numbers, usually one to ten birds, but three records of 20 to 24 birds, in August 1991, September 1993 and September 1999. Two records of single birds in spring (May 1990 and 1992).

**DUNLIN** *Calidris alpina* This is a common winter visitor and passage migrant at OPS. These visitors form part of the large population that feeds on the muddy foreshore of the Severn Estuary. The winter birds belong to the nominate race *C.a. alpina*. There is an indication of a small spring passage, probably birds which have wintered in southern Europe or Africa which are heading for breeding areas in Iceland *C.a. schintzii* and north-east Greenland *C.a. arctica*. Winter numbers average c.300 birds, but in some years can be much higher (maximum count 2,700 in February 2001). Table 10 suggests an autumn passage of birds peaking in August, with wintering birds arriving from October.

**Table 10** Average and maximum monthly counts of Dunlin, 1979-2005.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	885	1040	542	23	89	1	201	365	240	276	997	700
Max. monthly	2000	2700	2100	190	590	7	1500	915	820	500	2030	2250

**BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER** *Limicola falcinellus* One record only of a single bird on 20-22 August 1983 (Vinicombe 1984). This was the first record for the Avon area.

**RUFF** *Philomachus philomachus* Formerly a fairly regular passage migrant in small numbers in both spring (March/April) and autumn (mostly August/September), mainly one to four birds, but 11 in August and eight in September 1993. Recorded occasionally in other months, except January. Of the 64 birds recorded 48 were on autumn passage. Not recorded since September 2000.

**JACK SNIPE** *Lymnocyptes minimus* A single bird was first recorded wintering between December 1980 and March 1981. Then none until September 1988, December 1990 and October 1994 (all singles). Recorded each winter since 1997/98 between November and April, with one to eight birds present in Lagoon No 2.

**COMMON SNIPE** *Gallinago gallinago* A common wintering bird in increasing numbers, mainly between August and April, with occasional birds in May and July. Mostly on water-logged patches on filled lagoons. Up to 1997 numbers recorded were between one and 20 birds, but far higher numbers since with a maximum of 164 birds counted in January 2000.

**WOODCOCK** *Scolopax rusticola* Only three records, of singles on 1 February 1985, 1 March 1986 and 1 January 1997.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa limosa* Regular passage migrant, being more common in the autumn than on spring passage. Counts of mainly between one and 20 birds, but 70-80 birds present October/November 1998, with 137 in October and 97 in November 2003. One to seven birds occasionally recorded in winter. Most, if not all, of these birds originate from Iceland (*L.l. islandica*)

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** *Limosa lapponica* A regular spring and autumn passage migrant. Usually in small numbers (one to ten birds), but 32 in September 1988 and occasionally far higher numbers on spring passage, e.g. 235 in April 1984, 190 in May 1992 and 63 in May 2000.



*Plate 1* View of Lagoon No. 1 in April 1998 from the sea wall looking south, with residue of winter flooding at left. (Photo: Andy Middleton)



*Plate 2* View of Lagoon No. 2 in April 1998 from its NE corner, now the site of a developing reedbed (see Fig. 1). (Photo: Andy Middleton)



**Plate 3** Lagoon No. 3 in October 2004. Flooding is due to pumping activities, conditions which would attract Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca* and Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*. (Photo: Pete Hazelwood)



**Plate 4** Lagoon No. 3 in January 2005 showing a typical daytime roost of ducks and gulls. (Photo: Pete Hazelwood)



**WHIMBREL** *Numenius phaeopus* A common passage migrant. More common on spring passage between 21 April and mid-May (540 birds recorded) and autumn passage in July and August (47 birds). Otherwise occasionally in June (once) and September and once in winter (15 January 1995). Most counts were from one to 20 birds. Highest numbers recorded in spring since the early 1990s with largest flocks in 1991 (29 in April, 36 in May) and 1996 (99 in April, 66 in May).

**EURASIAN CURLEW** *Numenius arquata* A common to abundant winter visitor using the high tide roosts from mid-July to late March/early April, with a few birds summering. Wintering numbers under 100 birds for the first five years or so of recording, but progressive increase in numbers since, with total wintering flocks now reaching between 1,000-2,000 birds. Numbers roosting can vary considerably during the winter, as sometimes the birds fly across the river to an alternative roost site in west Gloucestershire. This species has declined again more recently.

**Table 11** Average and maximum monthly counts of Eurasian Curlew, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	360	342	235	29	25	12	237	542	576	474	413	387
Max. monthly	1420	1200	1800	199	90	118	990	1430	1410	1255	1500	1000
Max. year	1992	1996	1987	2000	1980	1990	1992	1992	1991	1988	1994	2000

**SPOTTED REDSHANK** *Tringa erythropus* Uncommon passage migrant. Majority of records (45 birds) on autumn passage late July to early October. Only three records in spring between 24 April and 30 May. There is one record in winter of three birds on 29 January 1984 with a single still present until 12 February.

**COMMON REDSHANK** *Tringa tetanus* Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Spring passage (March/April) less marked than in autumn (late July to October). There was a progressive increase in numbers in winter at the high tide roost peaking at 185 in January 1985 and 158 in December 1989 to January 1990. Since then numbers have been far lower (14-62 birds).

**Table 12** Average and maximum monthly counts of Common Redshank, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	45	46	44	12	3	6	36	75	57	56	70	57
Max. monthly	185	144	150	40	46	37	96	150	100	145	202	158
Max. year	1985	1990	1990	1992	1986	1984	1991	1983	1983	1988	1989	1989

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* A formerly common and regular autumn passage migrant. Spring passage much smaller and irregular. Mostly seen in small groups of one to four birds. Largest number recorded was 13 in September 1994. Also recorded in winter on four occasions with five birds in December 1989 and singles in January/February 1984, January 1996 and January 1998.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus* Regular on autumn passage, usually one to four birds from late June to October. Occasional birds over-winter with singles November/December 1983 and January/February 1995.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola* Three records only. Two singles in autumn on 7 Aug 1983 (T.G. Evans and J.D.R. Vernon) and 6 September 1993 with one on spring passage on 5 May 1996 (P.J. Hazelwood).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos* A common passage migrant in small numbers, usually one to five birds, but occasionally up to 10 or 11 birds seen (August 1984 and September 1979). Individuals have over-wintered (1984, 1994 and 2001).

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* A common winter visitor from July to early May with occasional birds lingering up to early June. Small numbers up to the late 1980s, but in the 1990s increasing numbers over-wintered, often reaching 100 birds or over. Birds counted are at a high tide roost on barges on the estuary just offshore. A maximum of c.150 birds was reached in the 1996/1997 winter.

**Table 13** Average and maximum monthly counts of Turnstone, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	65	56	59	50	5	1	15	52	46	63	55	68
Max. monthly	147	95	118	112	40	8	36	75	86	89	104	147
Max. year	1997	1997	1996	1996	1986	1991	1993	88/96	1984	1979	1979	1996

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius* Four records, all of single birds: 18 September 1989 (D.H. Payne), 11th to 15 Sep 1993 (P.A. Fraser *et al.*), 16 Sep 1994 (A.J. Middleton) and 8 October 1995 (J.J. Garrigan & M. Raven). The 1993, 1994 and 1995 birds were juveniles.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus* Only two records: two on 6 May 1989 (K.E. Vinicombe) and a juvenile in the evening gull roost on 25 August 2000 (D.H. Payne).

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua* Singles on 27 September 1984 and 12 October 1988.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus* Since 1993 one to four birds regularly seen at the high tide roost mostly between July and September, with occasional single birds between October and December (1996 and 2000) and February (2001) with 2 singles in March (1996 and 1999).

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* Two or more immature birds were present between 24 May and 10 June 1979, with a maximum of nine on 28 May and 10 June. The seven present on 26 May left at 18.15 hrs, flying west across the river then following the shoreline to SW. There were six present on 19 May and one on 30 May 1980. A single was present on 12 April 1982. Since then there has been six records of single birds: one on 23 June 1990 and the other five between 5 August and 15 November also in 1990. Only once recorded in winter, a second winter bird on 23/24 February 2000.

SABINE'S GULL *Larus sabini* A rare storm-driven visitor to the Severn Estuary. Only 2 records: one on 6 September 1983 (A.Hawkins & A. Merritt) and an immature on 3/4 November 1996 (D.H. & L. Payne).

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* A common species at the high tide gull/wader roost. A roost has existed on all three silt lagoons as each one came into use. These are birds which feed on the tidal mud of the Severn Estuary. In addition, there is a night gull roost offshore and high counts in some months at least probably reflect pre-roost gatherings on the lagoons, with many birds coming in from feeding areas on farmland in the Severn Vale. There have been very few counts of the night roost offshore at Oldbury but the four most recent were in January 1980 (2,675 counted), January 1984 (1,850), January 1993 (only 10) (Vinicombe 1994) and January 2002 (back up to 2,980).

**Table 14** Average and maximum monthly counts at the high tide roost of Black-headed Gulls, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	400	543	211	30	25	215	974	1520	874	569	342	496
Max. monthly	2980	400	600	90	112	845	2200	4000	3000	2630	1700	1700
Max. year	2002	1998	2000	1980	1997	1995	2000	1994	2000	1998	1996	2000

The higher counts in July/August at the high tide roost reflect the return of birds from UK breeding colonies and later in September/October the arrival of wintering birds from northern Europe. First arrival of returning breeding birds occurs from late June. Mid-summer counts of birds flying into the night offshore roost include 3,000 there in late July 1985 and 7,000 in August 1989. There is

little indication of any marked passage of birds in spring, but most have left by the end of March.

**RING-BILLED GULL** *Larus delawarensis* A scarce transatlantic visitor to North-west Europe. One record only of a second-winter bird on 2 October 1994 (A.J. Middleton & D.H. Payne).

**COMMON GULL** *Larus canus* This was formerly a far less common species than Black-headed Gull, with mid-winter counts rarely exceeding 100 birds. This was reflected in the small number using the night roost offshore, though 582 were counted at the roost in December 2003. Few Common Gulls feed on the river, with the majority feeding on farmland on the Cotswolds and roosting at night at Frampton on Severn (Vernon & Walsh 1966). There is some evidence of passage through the area, e.g. in spring (280 in March 1983) and in autumn (600 present in late July 1989).

**Table 15** Average and maximum monthly counts at the high tide roost of Common Gull, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	26	14	50	25	3	2	76	127	28	50	21	43
Max. monthly	121	30	280	65	7	4	150	200	115	135	64	582
Max. year	1999	1982	1982	1981	1982	1995	1994	2000	1998	1998	1997	2003

The small numbers normally wintering are reflected by counts of birds flying into the night roost offshore: 82 in January 1980 and 70 in January 1983, but 600 in December 2003. However, numbers have risen recently with, e.g. 1,500 in March 2005.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus fuscus* Numbers of birds wintering vary from two to 50 birds, but up to 100 were present in 1986/87 and 1988/89 winters. The generally low numbers are reflected by the counts of birds flying into the night roost offshore, e.g. four in January 1980 and 10 in January 1983. Numbers on the lagoons generally remain low throughout the year. Highest count has been of 200 in May 2000, which may reflect birds on passage.

**Table 16** Average and maximum monthly counts at the high tide roost of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	17	6	5	9	24	20	13	16	7	7	22	20
Max. monthly	52	29	22	43	200	44	29	47	22	27	110	48
Max. year	2000	2002	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000

**HERRING GULL** *Larus argentatus* Generally small numbers present in winter, two to 20 birds, but 137 present in December 2000. Counts of birds flying into the offshore roost are also low, c.20 in January 1980 and five in January 1983. An increase in numbers in June and July occurs, especially in recent years. Highest counts include 430 in June 1990 reaching 600 by 12 July, but whether these are local birds or immigrants is unknown. In earlier years, numbers remained low until the end of the year, but in recent years numbers sometimes reach 100 birds in mid-winter.

**Table 17** Average and maximum monthly counts at the high tide roost of Herring Gulls, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	8	9	6	24	36	79	66	21	28	24	6	25
Max. monthly	22	29	17	200	100	430	600	100	123	105	78	137
Max. year	2001	2002	2000	1982	2000	1990	1990	1994	1998	1999	1999	2000

**YELLOW-LEGGED GULL** *Larus cachinnans* Since 1991 a regular, but scarce, visitor recorded throughout the year in small numbers. Usually only one to four birds, but eight present in August 1993.

**ICELAND GULL** *Larus glaucooides* Six records of one or two birds. Singles on 17 March and between 30 June and 17 July 1996, then on 15 February 1998 and 9 Oct 1999. Two were present on 17/18 Feb 2000, one staying until to 24 February and seen again on 5 March 2000. A bird seen in June/July 1999 was identified as belonging to the race *kumlieni*, known as Kumlien's Gull (D.H. Payne *et al.*) (Vinicombe 2003).

**GLAUCOUS GULL** *Larus hyperboreus* One record only: a single immature on 22 January 1984 (T.G Evans & J.D.R Vernon).

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** *Larus marinus* Numbers usually very low (two to seven birds) throughout the winter period, but increase from April onwards reaching a peak of 60 birds between June and August. Numbers recorded in recent years have been much lower than recorded in the mid 1990s.

**Table 18** Average and maximum monthly counts at the high tide roost of Great Black-backed Gulls, 1979-2005, with year of maximum count.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Av. monthly	4	4	4	9	12	20	20	16	8	6	4	5
Max. monthly	7	7	31	27	47	60	57	42	25	16	30	15
Max. year	88/92	1994	1986	1994	1993	93/95	1995	1996	1996	1997	1987	87/89

**KITTIWAKE** *Rissa tridactyla* Mostly recorded offshore and usually in gale conditions. The first record was of a single bird on 16 January 1983. Then more regularly recorded since 1991 (mostly offshore), between late October and the end of February, but once in May. Records are: 45 on 5 January 1991; a single on 13 December 1992; 16 on 16 May 1993; singles on 3rd, 4th and 7 November 1996; two on 27 February 1997; up to three between 3rd and 9 January 1998; 16 on 3 January, two on 30 October and one on 6 November 1999; 10 on 13 December 2000 and at least 23 heading up the estuary on 26 January 2002.

**SANDWICH TERN** *Sterna sandvicensis* Two records only: single birds on 21 August 1983 and 24 April 1994.

**COMMON TERN** *Sterna hirundo* Irregular migrant occurring (mostly offshore) between the end of April and the end of May (three records in June) and from July to September. Numbers usually between two and 20, but unprecedented numbers (most if not all this species) occurred in 1984 (139 on 30 April) and in 1990 (64 on 9 May). Often seen (in single figures) in the gull roost in the autumn.

**ARCTIC TERN** *Sterna paradisaea* There is only one record specifically identified as this species: a juvenile between 11 and 19 September 1983.

**LITTLE TERN** *Sterna albifrons* Three records: singles on 10 September 1983 and 4 September 1994, with two in May 2003.

**BLACK TERN** *Chlidonias niger* An occasional spring and autumn migrant since 1989. Six records: 15 on 6 May 1989; three on 13 May 1990; seven on 28 April 1991; two on 21 September 1993; singles on 1 September 1996 and 16 May 1997.

**COMMON GUILLEMOT** *Uria aalge* or **RAZORBILL** *Alca torda* An unidentified auk noted offshore on 17 September 1994 was considered one or other of these species.

**LITTLE AUK** *Alle alle* One record: a single bird on 18 January 1984.

**ROCK DOVE (Feral Pigeon)** *Columba livia* Birds are ever-present around the site and roost on the buildings. Numbers are augmented in spring and summer by grounded racing pigeons.

**STOCK DOVE** *Columba oenas* This species can occur in large numbers throughout the autumn, winter and early spring months to feed on seed available from plants in the filled-in Lagoons No. 1 and 2. Up to 150 were present

December 1984/January 1985, with 75 in February and 65 in September. 120 were recorded in September 1988, with a maximum count of 100 in December 1995. Then in 1996 there were 130 in January, but numbers reached 340 in February and 445 in March with, in autumn, approximately 200 in November rising to 800 in December. In 1997 there were 600 in January, 700 in February, dropping to 200 in March. 180 were counted in December 1999. A few also feed on the saltmarsh area of Lagoon No. 3.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus* A few occurred in areas of salt marsh in Lagoon No. 1 in 1984. Now fairly common in the study area, especially in trees around the power station.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur* A scarce passage migrant. Only three records: singles on 23 May 1983 and 24 May 1990 with three on 6 May 1993.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto* An uncommon visitor to the study area. Small numbers recorded of birds from neighbouring farms. Seen most months, but mainly July to September.

COMMON CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus* Three were seen at dusk on 29 May 1981 feeding on adult crane-flies (Tipulidae) over short cut grass by the entrance to the power station. Other records include four on 21 May 1989, with single juveniles on 9 August 1998 and 1 August 1999. Regular most years in spring and early summer, but becoming much less common since 2000.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba* A scarce species. Only four records, all since 1995. Single birds in August 1995, March and December 1997 and finally one on 16 August 2000.

LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua* Regularly observed in the study area throughout the year. It breeds quite commonly in the Oldbury-on-Severn area, mainly in pollarded willows.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus* The first record was of two seen on 27 November, 1988 (D.H Payne). Since 1994 it has been recorded in most years, usually found roosting in dense tree growth adjacent to the South Meadow (which is adjacent to the footpath on SE boundary). Records are as follows: singles on 12th and 16 October 1994; singles on 18 March and between 25 March and 28 April, with a dead bird found on 25 March, all in 1995. There was a maximum of seven birds in December 1996 to February 1997, with six in March dropping to two on 6 April, then a single bird up to 22 April. This is the largest group ever seen in the Avon area. A photo of one of these birds, taken by D. Kjaer appeared on the front cover of the 1997 *Avon Bird Report*. A single bird was present on 1/2 November then two on 26 December 1997, but only one

on 14 February 1998. Two noted on 13 November 1998 and finally one in January 2001.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** *Asio flammeus* Since 1982, there have been a number of records of this species hunting over the filled-in lagoons. They were at first attracted in to feed on the number of rodents which built up after Lagoon No. 1 had re-vegetated and later on as Lagoon No. 2 filled in. Records were regular up to the end of 1990 but no others until 1995 when one dead bird was found on 19 March. Then singles on 5 May 1996, 2 February, and 2nd and 9 March 1997 and 13/14 February and 25 April 1998. Largest numbers were recorded in the 1998/1999 winter over Lagoon No. 1 with a maximum of seven on 27 November 1998. A single bird was noted in November 2000.

**COMMON SWIFT** *Apus apus* Small numbers occasionally over the lagoons from late April, the earliest date being 17 April 1994. Movements to N were recorded on 4 May with 124 to the N on 6 May 2000. Last migrants occur from late August to end September, latest dates being 25 September 1994 (a single) and, exceptionally, eight birds on 1 October, also in 1994.

**COMMON KINGFISHER** *Alcedo atthis* Singles in July and on 29 October 1995 and singles in September from 1999 to 2003 inclusive. There were no records in 2004 but an individual was present in September, October and December 2005.

**GREEN WOODPECKER** *Picus viridis* Present throughout the year since the early 1990s. Breeding was proved on the site in 1993 and in 2002.

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopus major* Regular visitor in most months, but no evidence of breeding.

**LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER** *Dendrocopus minor* A single record of one on 1 April 1996.

**SKY LARK** *Alauda arvensis* Breeds in small numbers on the filled-in Lagoon No.2. Maximum of 100 (in 1985) recorded during winter on this lagoon. Several hundred birds were observed moving up river offshore on 16 February 1991. Regular winter visitor in numbers between 10 and 50.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia* A regular spring and autumn passage migrant. Usually small numbers, but sometimes larger groups, e.g. 33 on 6 May 2000, 20 present on 28 September 1991 and 30 on 13 September 2003.

**BARN SWALLOW** *Hirundo rustica* A common spring and autumn migrant. Small numbers hawk over the lagoons from early April onwards (earliest on 26 Mar 1996). 380 flew to NW in two hours on 10 May 1998 with 140 to N on 6



May and 570 in same direction on 12 May 2000. In the autumn 300+ on 28 September 1991, 120 on 19 September 1992 and 200 there on 14 September 1993. Late summer roosts of birds on passage regularly number a few hundred. 1,000 passed through the area in two hours on 22 September 1994. Five were present as late as 1 November in 1997.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbicum* A fairly common spring and autumn passage migrant. Usually only small numbers recorded in spring, but 60+ over lagoons on 1 May 1983. In autumn 400 on 14 September 1993 and 1,000 birds present on 22 September 1994. 1,060 birds passed to SW in one hour on the morning of 18 September 1996, with 400 birds present on 21 September 1997.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae* A rare autumn vagrant. A single record: one flushed several times from the filled-in Lagoon No.2 on 22 October 1996 (R.M. Andrews, P.A. Fraser and J.P. Martin).

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis* Occurs in small numbers most years on both spring and autumn passage, usually flying over, but occasionally seen within the study area. Singles on 29 August 1994, 12 August 1995 and 15 August 1996 with two on 25 July 1998.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis* One or two pairs breed most years around the lagoon areas. Flocks occur in the autumn from late August to mid-October (e.g. 60 on 10 September 1995; 130 on 13 October 1996), with a maximum of 20 wintering. 130 moving up river on 1 April 1990 and 120+ moving N in 2 hours on 13 April 1991, were presumably departing wintering birds or passage birds which had wintered further south.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta* Three records of single birds on passage on 5 April 1995, 12 May 1996 (D.H. Payne) and in March 2002 (A.J. Middleton).

ROCK PIPIT *Anthus petrosus* One or two birds regularly seen (since 1989) between October and February; once on 29 April 1992. Most occur along the sea wall or in the salt marsh. Also one on 7 August 1996 and a juvenile 25 July 1998, which might indicate breeding in a nearby locality.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava* A regular passage migrant between 17 April and 23 May in spring and then between 21 August and 20 September in autumn. Maxima of 20 recorded on 1 May 1983, 23 on 23 April 1989, 20 on 21 August 1990 and 22 on 1 September 1996. Three records of early autumn migrants in July: 12 juveniles on 15 July 1990, with singles on 25 July 1995 and 22 July 1998. A pair bred on Lagoon No.3 in 2001. Unfortunately numbers are showing signs of a decline.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea* A frequent visitor in small numbers, occurring in most months of the year.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarellii* Breeds regularly within the station complex. One pair feeding fully fledged young on 7 June 1981 was the first proof of breeding. Small numbers occur in the lagoon areas throughout the year (maximum of 36, September to December). A large night roost using the power station buildings has been known since the late 1970s. Pre-roost assemblies of 1,000-2,000 birds were observed in the 1979/80 winter and up to 5,000 in January/February 1981. Few counts since; 500 present January 1996, but usually a maximum of 200/300 birds.

White Wagtail *M. a. alba* One recorded on spring passage in 1989, but no dates given.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis* Several pairs are resident in the study area.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula* Several pairs present, nesting in the hedgerows.

COMMON NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos* Two records only: single birds in June 1985 and on 4 August 1991.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochrurus* A rare winter visitor, but possibly bred one year in the power station buildings. Single birds recorded on 16 January 1983, in December 1992, on 16 December 1994, on 14 November 1995, a male on 30 November and 1 December 1996, a male on 1 January 1997 and 14 December 2000, with two males on other dates in December 2000. Finally, three on 2 January 2001. A female was observed carrying food into a building on 26 May 1994, but no further proof of breeding was obtained. A first-summer male in song was present on 7 May 1999.

COMMON REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* Small numbers, usually occurring as singles, noted on passage on 11 September 1995, 1 April 1999, 31 August 2000, April and August 2001 and again in August 2002 and 2003.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* At least 12 records of birds on spring passage (April/May). More common on autumn passage with usually one to six birds present, mostly in August and occasionally into October. Three early autumn passage birds recorded, one on 15 July 1989 and one on 28 July 1990, with a juvenile on 11 July 1997. One bird was taken by a Sparrowhawk on 30 August 1997.

COMMON STONECHAT *Saxicola torquatus* Usually present in small numbers from September to March/April. One on 14 October 1984, with a

maximum of five on autumn passage in October 2000. A juvenile seen on 18 June 1999 may have indicated that breeding had occurred locally. Up to six were present in November and December 1995.

**NORTHERN WHEATEAR** *Oenanthe oenanthe* A common spring and autumn passage migrant in small numbers (usually one to four birds). The earliest was on 9 March 1997. Latest dates were in 1994 when singles were seen on 17 November and 9th and 10 December (P.A. Fraser and K.E. Vinicombe). These are the latest dates ever recorded for the Avon area.

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus* A rare migrant. Two records of single birds on 24 April 1991 and 10 April 2000.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula* A common breeder and present throughout the year.

**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris* A common winter visitor in variable numbers. Largest numbers recorded include 280 on 24 February and 310 on 11 March 1990, 125 on 2 November 1995, then in 1998, 320 on 2 November with 300 on 1 December rising to 650 on 4th reaching 800 by 12th and remaining at that number until the end of the month. 150 still present on 21 March 1999 and five there on 10 October 1999. They defend apple trees in the orchard in cold weather.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos* Present all year, but more seen in winter when large numbers (50+) flock to the coast and feed on small snails which congregate on woody stemmed shrubs on Lagoon No.2.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus* A fairly common winter visitor in varying numbers. 220 on 11 Dec 1989, 700 in January 1996 and 200 on 10 October 1999. Ten birds were still present on 25 April 1995, which is a late date in spring.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus* Uncommon. Usually occurs in very small numbers in the autumn. May have bred on the site in the late 1990s.

**CETTI'S WARBLER** *Cettia cettia* Recorded singing from the small pool behind Lagoon No.3 in June 2005. [One record of single bird in the Lagoon No.1 reedbed on 25 February 2001 (D.H. Payne), was not accepted by Avon Rarities Committee.]

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** *Locustella naevia* The species is believed to have bred adjacent to the E side of Lagoon No.2 in May 1994. There were then no records until 2000 when three were present on 22 April and one in song throughout May and June, but breeding not proved. Reeling individuals

recorded in July 2003, April and May 2004 and June 2005 usually in rank vegetation in Lagoon No.2.

**SEDGE WARBLER** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* One first observed in hedgerow adjacent to Lagoon No.1 on 19 May 1983. Breeding first proved in 1994 on Lagoon No.2 and again in 1999, but may breed most years in small numbers. The latest autumn date was 24 September 1989.

**REED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* Bred in 1994 and 1995 in reeds along the east drainage ditch, and more recently in reed beds on Lagoon No.2. Probably 20-25 pairs, but numbers increasing as the reed beds expand.

**BLACKCAP** *Sylvia atricapilla* Four to five pairs present and probably breed. Occasionally seen in winter.

**GARDEN WARBLER** *Sylvia borin* Occurs nearly every year and probably breeds. The earliest spring date was 22 April 2000.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia curruca* Present every year and probably one or two pairs have bred in most years since 1997. Also a regular passage migrant, especially in spring. Earliest arrival date was 21 April 2000.

**COMMON WHITETHROAT** *Sylvia communis* A spring and autumn migrant in small numbers. Earliest record was 4 April 2002, latest 25 September 1994. 15-20 pairs in breeding season, so no doubt breeds in most years.

**WOOD WARBLER** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* A rare spring and autumn migrant. Only three records of single birds: 17 July 1993, 21 April 1996 and 2 August 1997.

**COMMON CHIFFCHAFF** *Phylloscopus collybita* A regular spring migrant in small numbers, earliest date being 3 March 2002. Higher numbers in autumn with maxima of 32 on 18 September 1996 and 39 on 24 August 2002. Single birds recorded in some winters. Recent records include singles in December 1996, on 1 November and on 2 December 1997, on 1 January 1998, on 1 November and in December 2001. May breed, but not proved.

**WILLOW WARBLER** *Phylloscopus trochilus* A spring and autumn migrant in small numbers. Maximum of 22 on 21 April 2000. A late autumn migrant was noted on 1 October 1996. Has bred since the early 1990s, usually six to nine pairs.

**GOLDCREST** *Regulus regulus* Present all year, but most obvious in the winter.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata* Uncommon spring and autumn migrant. Nine records of single birds. Four records in spring on 21 May 1995, 16 May 1999, in May 2003 and 2 on 15 May 2005. Four records in autumn all in August between 2nd and 24 August since 1995.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca* Three records only, all in 1994: singles on 1 May and 3 August with two on 4/5 August.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus* Common. Nests every year.

BLUE TIT *Cyanistes caeruleus* Fairly common breeding resident in trees within the power station area.

GREAT TIT *Parus major* A common breeding resident.

COAL TIT *Periparus ater* Mainly occurs as a passage migrant during late September/October in small numbers, with only occasional winter records.

MARSH TIT *Poecile palustris* Four records only of single birds in November 1989, September 1994, April 1995 and August 2002.

EURASIAN NUTHATCH *Sitta europea* Two records of single birds: 26 November 1995 and in August 1996. The site does not have any large trees suitable for this species.

EURASIAN TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris* Eight records up to 2003: two in November 1994, with singles on 22 October and 14 December 1995, 11 May 1996, 5 Oct 1997, 8 Nov 1998, and also in November/December 2002 and December 2003. Since 2003 this species is beginning to occur more often as trees mature on the site.

EURASIAN JAY *Garrulus glandarius* Formerly infrequent, but now more common as the woodland matures. Breeding resident.

MAGPIE *Pica pica* A resident species in moderate numbers. Birds congregate around the adjoining chicken farms.

WESTERN JACKDAW *Corvus monedula* A common forager within the study area. Nests in tree holes just outside the power station boundary.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus* Uncommon within the study area, despite a large rookery present in woodland just outside the power station boundary where large flocks occur in winter.

**CARRION CROW** *Corvus corone* Present in small numbers, often disturbing the Black-headed Gull flocks at the high tide roost on Lagoon No.3. This species often settles on the bare silt areas when this is present on the lagoons.

**COMMON RAVEN** *Corvus corax* No records until 1995, when a single was seen on 26 November and up to three birds during December. Then a single in January/February 1996 and also singles on various dates between September and December. Three birds on 4 September and a single on 2 November 1997. Two on 30 January to 1 February and on 25 July 1998. Finally, a single in January and two on 26 August 1999. Becoming more frequent in recent years in all months.

**COMMON STARLING** *Sturnus vulgaris* Resident in small numbers with nesting occurring in the power station buildings. Flocks of up to 300-400 in late summer, mainly consisting of juveniles. In the late 1980s flocks in winter numbered in their thousands but have declined since, in line with the national trend, with generally only a few hundred present.

**HOUSE SPARROW** *Passer domesticus* Uncommon. Sometimes a few stray into the study area from surrounding farms.

**TREE SPARROW** *Parus montanus* A flock of 80 was present on 28 January 1982. Small numbers were recorded in the autumn of 1994. Up to 20 recorded on various dates between April and September 1996 then ten from January to May with a group of 30 on 24 July and 17 in October, 1997. Birds were present in the breeding season in 1995, but breeding not proved until 1997, when two nests were found. They nested again in 2000. They have almost disappeared since. This species was formerly common around nearby chicken farms, but numbers have declined considerably since the expansion and sanitization of the farms. These measures prevented the sparrows from entering the buildings.

**COMMON CHAFFINCH** *Fringilla coelebs* Large flocks in varying numbers (maxima of 450 on 11 December 1988 and 330 on 19 November 1989) are attracted onto Lagoon No.2 in autumn/winter by the amount of seed available. 120 were still present in March 1990. Numbers have declined since with the increased growth of scrub vegetation and reedbed in Lagoon No.2. Numbers are now beginning to increase in Lagoon No.3 when conditions are suitable in winter.

**BRAMBLING** *Fringilla montifringilla* A maximum of 80 birds were present between January and March 1984, along the SE edge of Lagoon No.2. Three were recorded in the 1989/90 winter and one from October to December 1994 and January/February 1995. Then a single bird flying to S on 5 October and six in December 1997, with singles in November/December 1998, November 1999, March 2000 and December 2002.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris* This species is also attracted to the abundant food source in Lagoon No.2, with 200 present on 23 August 1995.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis* Many are attracted onto Lagoon No.2 in early autumn to feed on the thistle (*Cirsium* sp.) seed and Wild Teasel. 200 recorded September/October 1989 with 180 in September 1992. 120 on 6 September increasing to 180 on 11th and falling to 40 by 3 October 1998. In the spring of 1995, 41 were observed flying to NE in 1 hour on 25 April.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus* Two early passage birds were noted on 18 July 1997, then eight on 31 May 1998. Noted in October/November 2001. 30 recorded on Alders *Alnus* sp. from September to November 2002. Since then, single birds have been seen feeding on Alder seeds in winter.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina* This species is also attracted in onto Lagoon No. 2 in autumn/winter to feed on the abundant seeds. Small flocks also occurred on Lagoon No.2 before it was filled with silt. 220 were recorded there in October 1991 with 150 on 12 September 1994, but on 7 September 1995 500 were observed feeding on Fat-hen *Chenopodium album* seed, with 300 birds still present in December. Flocks are now feeding in winter on Lagoon No.3 when conditions are suitable. Small numbers breed.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris* A small group of ten birds fed on seed heads of salt marsh plants in Lagoon No.1 from 19 February to 3 March 1984. The only other record is of one on 23 November 1991.

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis cabaret* and COMMON REDPOLL *C. flammea* Now a fairly regular spring (April/May) and late autumn (October to December) migrant in small numbers. The records probably relate to the recently split species Lesser Redpoll. Records include a high count of 12 birds on 17 November 1994.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* An increasing species, as planted trees mature. Breeds.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* Only one record of two on 1 November 1997 (P.A. Fraser).

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* Four records only: a single on 21 February 1984, two on 2 December 1990, two on 13 October 1996 and a single bird in December 2002.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emeriza citrinella* A winter visitor in small numbers. Becoming more scarce in recent years. Maximum of 50 in winter recorded on 14 January 1990.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus* A pair first recorded in 1982 and 1983 in a reed-fringed field, during the breeding season, before Lagoon No.2 was excavated. Breeding has probably occurred in later years, but is rarely proved. Small numbers (maximum 16) are often present in winter. Numbers are increasing as the reedbeds expand.

CORN BUNTING *Emberiza calandra* Accidental visitor with only one record of a single bird on 11 March 1995.

### **Escaped or Released Birds**

LESSER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus minor* One on 17 April 1988. A presumed escape from Slimbridge.

SNOW GOOSE *Anser caerulescens* Two birds present on 29 May 1989 were probably escapes from collections.

BLUE-WINGED GOOSE *Cyanochen cyanopterus* One feeding on grass at the edge of Lagoon No.1 on 12 June 1982 (J.D.R.Vernon) was no doubt an escape from the collection at Slimbridge.

RINGED TEAL *Anseaucophr lrys* One on 24 September 1999.

HOTTENTOT TEAL *Anas hottentota* One on 24 September 1999.

TURKEY VULTURE *Cathartes aura* Single bird with jesses photographed from the hide in July 2004.

COCKATIEL *Nymphicus hollandicus* One on 3 September 1995.

CHESTNUT MUNIA *Lonchura Malacca* One with Goldfinches on 3 September 1995.

### **Acknowledgements**

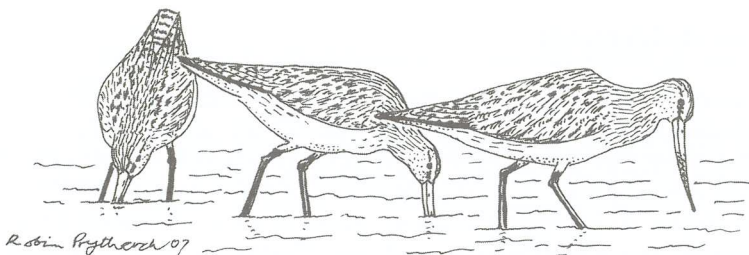
We would particularly like to thank the many other observers who have contributed records during the study period. We are most grateful both to Dr. Smitton, when CEGB Station Manager at Oldbury and the present Director of Magnox Electric plc for their permission to visit the lagoons since 1979 and also to Mrs Hayley Nicholson, Information Officer of the power station for access to unpublished papers relating to the study site. Thanks are due to Pete Hazelwood for his photographs (see [www.phazelwood.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/OPS.htm](http://www.phazelwood.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/OPS.htm)).



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A.J. Middleton, D.H. Payne and J.D.R. Vernon  
 19 Cricklade Road, Bishopton, Bristol BS7 9EW.



## Club Activities 2004, 2005 and 2006

Club membership remained fairly constant over the three year period, despite a rise in subscription rates in 2005. 690 members were recorded in January 2004 with 686 at the end of 2006. *Bird News* continued to be published monthly with the bird records collated by Steve Hale, Peter Hazelwood, Geoff Suter and Jason Williams and various committee members editing Club News, containing field meeting reports, members' contributions and items of interest. The bird records are used in the compilation of the annual *Avon Bird Report*, published jointly by BOC and the Bristol Naturalists' Society. Many Club members undertook local surveys for the BTO under the leadership of John Tully and Richard Bland. The Club's website continued to expand with regular updates and the addition of a message board under the guidance of Chris Baker, Ed Drewitt and Gordon Youdale. The number of new members gained through the website was encouraging.

The Peregrine watch weekends in the Avon Gorge took place each year, organised by Charles Stapleton, with a total of eight young fledged in the three years. The weekends prove a good opportunity to promote the Club and provide many members of the public with excellent views of the Peregrines. Migration watches were held in October each year at various points on the Severn estuary from Severn Beach to Sand Point.

### 2004

The traditional meeting at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge on New Year's Day was followed by a full year of club activities with 35 field meetings. Several new venues were visited during the year including the WWT centre at Barnes where Rose-ringed Parakeet proved a highlight. A meeting at Christmas Common in March gave excellent views of many Red Kite and the journey north to Upton Warren in April was rewarded with 65 species on the day list. Coach trips were held in February to the Exe Estuary (with a Lesser Scaup seen), and Portland in September, marred by bad weather but ending the day on a high with Spotted Crake and Bearded Tit showing well at Radipole. In August a mini-bus was laid on to take 14 members to the Bird Fair at Rutland Water.

The highly popular mid-week meetings continued throughout the year, with Margaret Swatton taking on the organisation of the mainly local walks led by members of the group. Several further afield mid-week meetings were organised by Margaret Searle including trips to Weymouth Harbour in January, finding grebes and divers; the Forest of Dean in May to look for Nightjar, and a river cruise on the River Exe in November with close views of the waders using the river in winter. Weekend field trips were held in Norfolk, Kent and Cornwall. A club holiday to Lesbos arranged and led by Jane Cumming proved

a great success with 24 members enjoying ten days of excellent birding. A long weekend visit to France in July organised by Ken and Lys Hall took members over the channel to Caen visiting the Cotentin peninsular, an area similar to the Somerset Levels, where they enjoyed views of Montagu's Harrier, Middle-spotted Woodpecker and Fan-tailed warbler.

The programme of indoor meetings was well supported. Former club chairman Mike Lord was welcomed back to talk about the return of the Chough to Cornwall and Dusty Gedge talked about green roofs and Black Redstarts. Club member Terry Bond presented a fresh approach to identification; Martin Davies explained the role of Birdlife International and artist John Gale enthused about Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. The Members' Evening in February produced a varied evening of high standard.

At the AGM Charles Stapleton was elected as Chairman. He succeeded David Turner who had led the Club for four years. Phyl Dykes joined the committee. As a result of losses made in 2004 the Treasurer, Keith Slade, proposed an increase in the subscription rates, the first rise for 15 years. The proposal was carried by a majority vote. After the business of the meeting Charles Martin gave an interesting talk on the facts and myths surrounding Grace Darling and the Farne Islands.

## **2005**

Bean Geese and Merlin got the year off to a good start on New Year's Day at Slimbridge and a trip to Torbay a week later added Cirl Bunting, Siberian Chiffchaff and Firecrest to the list. Thursley Common in April was a new venue this year and good views of Dartford Warbler were enjoyed. In July a Club tally hunt was organised and several teams, pairs and individuals took part in the contest with the winning team clocking up 67 species within the old county of Avon. Coach trips were arranged to the Exe Estuary in February and Farlington Marsh in October where a variety of waders were seen at close range and a Little Gull proved a highlight.

A weekend in February was spent in Tregaron and a second to Norfolk in May. North Kent was the venue in November, visiting the Isle of Sheppey, Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve, the Oare Marshes and also Herne Bay where the group managed to catch up with a Desert Wheatear. A very successful Club holiday was arranged to the Western Isles in June with the help of local resident and Club member Brian Rabbitts. White-tailed Eagle, Corncrake and numerous breeding waders and divers were among the many highlights. Roger White arranged a couple of short trips to Brandenburg where he was able to show members numerous birds of prey, huge flocks of geese and cranes, Great Bustards and White-tailed Eagles in an area seldom visited by British birders.

Indoor meetings of 2005 featured an inside look at the birds of the Avon Wildlife Trust reserves with Tim McGrath; a light-hearted approach to bird song

by Dominic Couzens; a very interesting talk by David Waters on the reintroduction of the Great Bustard to Salisbury Plain and a presentation on owls of the world by photographer Mike Leach. Club member Edward Drewitt completed the programme with an informative talk on garden birds.

Keith Slade resigned as Treasurer at the AGM and Susan Sayers was appointed to the position. A "Club Special Award" was given to Don Cullen for his work encouraging beginners to birdwatching. It was recognised that he had introduced many members to the Club. Malcolm Sainsbury completed the evening with a talk on his travels in South America.

## **2006**

During 2006 a total of 36 weekend or evening meetings were held including coach trips to the Exe estuary and a new trip combining Kenfig Nature Reserve with the Llanelli WWT, both of which were well supported. The full programme of midweek walks continued to grow in popularity. A meeting in February was organised to visit the Great Bustard reintroduction project on Salisbury Plain and a new venue in the Brecon Beacons was visited in June with good views of Ring Ouzel and Red Kite. There was a different format for a trip to the Somerset Levels in December with an afternoon start and finishing with the spectacular starling roost at Ham Wall RSPB reserve.

Weekend trips were arranged to Morecombe Bay, visiting Leighton Moss RSPB reserve; East Yorkshire in June and Norfolk in November. In May seventeen members travelled to Estonia for an excellent holiday organised through Finnature, and Ken Hall led another group to France in July for a long weekend in the Calais region visiting wetland and forest sites. Due to popular demand Roger White took two more groups to Brandenburg in October, with several new venues added to the itinerary.

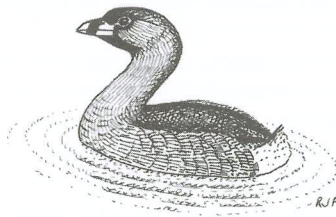
The programme of indoor meetings began in January with a talk by former member Andy Musgrove on the increase of Little Egret. There followed talks on South American adventures from Mike Dilger; the breeding birds of southern England by Graham Wren; the life of the Merlin from Keith Offord and a fascinating journey to Hardangervidda in Norway with Gordon Langsbury. A varied itinerary was laid on at Members' Evening in February, with full use being made of the Club's new digital projection equipment.

At the AGM Chris Perry was awarded the Stanley Crick award in recognition of his growing involvement with his local patch at Golden Valley in Wick. After the business of the evening Nick Ayers, David Wilson and Geoff Harris were declared winners of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary photographic competition. Malcolm Sainsbury entertained with a talk on Malawi and the successful end to his two-year hunt to photograph Pel's Fishing Owl.

**Indoor Meetings**

- 15.01.04 Terry Bond – Birdwatching Identification, a new approach  
 19.02.04 Members' Evening  
 18.03.04 Dusty Gedge – Black Redstart  
 16.09.04 John Gale – The Southern Oceans and Antarctica  
 21.10.04 Martin Davies – Birdlife International: What's the Big Idea?  
 18.11.04 Mike Lord – Cornish Choughs: "The Happy Return"  
 16.12.04 Annual General Meeting
- 20.01.05 Tim McGrath – Birds of the Avon Wildlife Trust Reserves  
 17.02.05 Members' Evening  
 17.03.05 Dominic Couzens – Bird Song  
 15.09.05 Great Bustard Introduction UK  
 20.10.05 Mike Leach – Owls of the World  
 17.11.05 Ed Drewitt – Garden Birds  
 15.12.05 Annual General Meeting
- 19.01.06 Andy Musgrove – Little Egrets  
 16.02.06 Members' Evening  
 16.03.06 Mike Dilger – Andes to Amazon  
 21.09.06 Graham Wren – Breeding Birds of Southern England  
 19.10.06 Keith Offord – Magical Merlins  
 16.11.06 Gordon Langsbury – Hardangervidda, Norway  
 14.12.06 Annual General Meeting

Margaret Searle *Honorary Secretary*

**Errata**

Bristol Ornithology 27 (2004).

The top two lines on page 35 ("County of ... of Somerset") should be deleted. They were accidentally repeated from the previous page.

