

DODDINGTON POOL BIRD REPORT 2022



Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)

By Dennis Swaby

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I feel that I must record the beneficial effect of the flood pool to the birdlife. It provided large muddy margins to water, a habitat which is suitable and attractive to wading birds but is not available elsewhere on the estate. In total 13 species of wader were recorded during the year and two species bred for the first time. By comparison just five species of wader were recorded in 2021, without the flood pool.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	0	0	7	7	45	70	77	71	87	71	36	2

Bird flu became established from late September and at least 15 dead birds were recovered but possibly twice that number died. There was no breeding effort recorded. One pair were resident on Lemon Pool.

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

A record of six on the 12th December.

Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*)

Several skeins of up to 70 recorded flying over in November and December. An occasional single was seen with the Greylags.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	90	2	7	2	0	41	90	310	300	400	250	2

The usual pattern with a big increase in numbers in autumn. Bird flu struck from late September and at least 30 carcasses were recovered but probably more died. One brood of six was noted in June.

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	210	250	140	130	90	210	160	320	300	300	300	17

A very poor year for breeding with just two broods of four and seven noted in June. Bird flu struck from late September and hit this species worst with at least 50 carcasses removed but probably more died.

Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)

Two were present on 9th January.

Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

An unprecedented year with at least three pairs bred, entirely due to the presence of the flood pool. On 13th June there were six adults with 18 juvs. The resident and obvious pair had five juvs and another two pairs appeared, one with two juvs and one with 11 juvs. None could fly so they must have walked in from nearby hidden sites. Present all year except for September and October.

Mandarin (*Aix galericulata*)

A pair were seen on 27th April.

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

In the first winter period peak counts of 12 in January and 13 in March; lower than usual numbers. Then in the second winter period from 4th October less than five except for 12 on 2nd December.

Teal (*Anas crecca*)

Few records in the first winter period with just five in January and three in February. Then present from 29th July to the year end with up to ten present, except for 17th December when an exceptional total of 143 were present.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

A very common resident and with many birds released no accurate counts were made but several hundred are always present. Many young seen.

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*)

Two recorded in January and March and then up to six in September and November.

Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

As usual only occasional records of this scarce bird here, with a single at the end of January and five for a few days in mid February.

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

Present from January to April with a maximum count of 29 in March. Present from October to the year end with a maximum count of 24 in December.

Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

Present in good numbers in the first winter period with 39 in January and 33 in February, then down to two on the 21st March. Returned from 4th October but always less than ten, finally with 14 on 26th December as numbers start to build up again. One on Lemon Pool in March and April was unable to fly.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	105	105	84	83	26	24	21	27	35	79	48	44

Present through the summer but no breeding noted on main pool. On Lemon Pool six pairs formed in March but only one brood was noted, a female with three juvs in July, a typically late breeding date.

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

A regular winter visitor, present from January to March, with maximum counts of 16 in January, 20 in February and 12 in March. Present then from 21st October, usually in lower numbers and with a maximum of ten on 26th December.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

A few decades ago this used to be the best site in Cheshire for Goosander. Strangely, although the species is much more common in the area with a few breeding pairs, it is now a scarce visitor here. Two on 9th February and a single on 4th November.

Red-legged Partridge (*Alectoris rufa*)

Regularly seen in the area, with a maximum count of six in March.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)

Many reared by the shooting syndicate and released.

Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Up to three recorded in January and February. Then from August through to the year end with a maximum count of 19 in October.

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)

A slight increase again with 25 nests recorded this year including three nests in two oak trees separate from the usual blue cedar site. Recorded in every month with a maximum count of 15 in November.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

A really poor year for breeding records with just four pairs on main pool and no juvs seen and two pairs on Lemon Pool with only four juvs seen. Actual numbers near normal with a maximum of 17 on main pool in November and eight on Lemon Pool in April.

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

Recorded in all months except December but a disastrous year for breeding. On main pool up to 17 adults were present in June and on Lemon two pairs were present. Despite head-shaking displays by pairs at both sites not a single juv was recorded! The maximum count was 22 in October.

Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*)

Two gave several sightings in late November.

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)

Resident and breeds in the area.

Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)

Resident and common. On 10th June 14 birds were seen kettling in a column over the estate.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)

One seen frequently around the Sailing Club as usual.

Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*)

One was seen frequently in November and December.

Merlin (*Falco columbarius*)

One took up territory in late winter with a few sightings of one during November.

Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Present on both pools all year but in surprisingly low numbers as usual; maximum count of seven and a few juvs were seen.

Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Maximum	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Doddington	290	245	240	114	92	305	530	850	810	780	800	650

Doddington continues to be a major site for Coot within the county. As usual numbers increased in autumn but did not reach last year's incredible 1,320. Many pairs bred and young were seen.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

Two birds were seen on 27th January, returning in the 4th week of January as usual nowadays. Present continuously then through to the last record on 30th July. The usual nest sites on the roof of two metal sheds in the boat park are unusual but this year a new nest site was even more bizarre. A female laid three eggs on the stump of a large tree next to the entrance gate and by the main road. Incubated for three weeks but unfortunately I was not available to do final checks so the outcome is unknown. Pairs also used the two usual roof sites but no young were seen.

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)

This species is a national rarity so there was some excitement when a family party of two adults and four young appeared on the flood pool on 11th August. (They would not have landed if the flood pool was not there!). These birds attracted a lot of visiting birders from the Midlands and North England and gave a lot of people a good year tick. One adult and one juv left on 13th August but the others stayed together until they all departed on 25th August.

Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)

Two birds arrived on 17th April on the flood pool. They presumably liked the conditions and stayed! Up to six were recorded through the summer and probably two pairs actually bred, with two small juvs being seen on 13th June. The first proved successful breeding here. The last record was three on 13th September.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

The flood pool proved very attractive to the Lapwing. Present all year, with maximum counts of 136 in January and 90 in October. At least one pair bred by the flood pool with two small juvs seen in June. Probably four pairs bred in the big maize field.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

One with the Lapwing on the flood pool on 31st January. Then in autumn up to three on the flood pool during October and one in December.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)

Present in the first winter period with three seen on the island. Once again the flood pool gave conditions that suited wading birds and Snipe were present here continuously from August to the year end with up to five often seen.

Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)

One was flushed from the juncus by the island on 12th September.

Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

On 20th October a juv/1st winter bird flew in with three Dunlin. These landed on the edge of the island and started feeding. The Phalarope landed on the water close by and started feeding by spinning and picking insects off the surface.

Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)

Singles were recorded on the flood pool in August, September and October.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*)

One was found in the evening of 14th May when it was on the island. It could not be re-found the next day.

Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)

Another species attracted to the site by the presence of the flood pool providing perfect conditions for wader species. Up to four present continuously through autumn migration from 10th July to 8th September.

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)

Only two records of singles on spring passage. Then one or two from mid-July to mid-September.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Two were seen briefly on 10th July.

Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

A maximum count of 4,500 in the gull roost on 31st December was similar to the new usual count for this species in the roost.

Common Gull (*Larus canus*)

Usually up to three on the water during winter and a count of 150 in the gull roost on 31st December.

Mediterranean Gull (*Larus melanocephalus*)

On 12th February one was found lingering in the overnight gull roost as they dispersed.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

A maximum count of 4,000 in the gull roost on 31st December, showing how much more common they are becoming. Up to 30 on the water in the daytime in winter.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

A maximum count of around 100 in the gull roost on 31st December and occasional low numbers in the daytime in winter.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

Five seen in the gull roost and occasional singles during the winter.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

One present on 5th September

Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)

Seen and heard regularly but no high counts recorded.

Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

Very common.

Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

A few records.

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

Does breed and adults occasionally seen at dusk from the main road.

Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)

Sadly no records this year.

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)

Resident and breeds.

Common Swift (*Apus apus*)

No high counts.

Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)

Recorded in autumn only.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

The commonest woodpecker and several pairs bred.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Seen occasionally.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)

Very common with flocks of 150 noted and many pairs breed in and around the hall.

Raven (*Corvus corax*)

The resident pair were recorded in most months but no juvs were recorded although four birds were seen together on 21st July.

Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)

Resident and breeds.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

Recorded in most months through the year.

Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)

The highest count was just 20 on 15th April.

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

The highest count was just 50 September.

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)

Birds were seen in May and June collecting mud from the flood pool for nest building. The highest count recorded was only ten.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)

A summer visitor.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)

A summer visitor.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*)

A summer visitor.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*)

A summer visitor.

Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*)

At least six singing males recorded in the reeds around Lemon Pool and several young seen in late summer.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Flocks of around 200 were present in each winter period.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)

No large flocks recorded.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)

No large flocks recorded.

Stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*)

Three birds were present at the end of December, a male and two juvs/females.

Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)

Only one record of two males and two females on 16th April.

Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

On 27th July three juvs walked out of the cereal crop to the flood pool. Adults were seen here in spring so they probably bred in the cereal crop.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)

A single in March. Then up to three present on the flood pool from mid-June to December. Last year without the flood pool there were no records in the autumn!

Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)

Present from mid-May to the year end. Probably two pairs bred and young were seen. The highest count on return passage was 27 on 26th September.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

No real spring passage with just two in March but steady in autumn in low numbers. Highest counts of 20 October and 23 in December.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

Commonest finch.

Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*)

A few records.

Lesser Redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*)

Two on 4th November.

Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)

Up to 30 present in October and November.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*)

Few finches recorded.

Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

A singing male seen from March to July but no proof of breeding.

Colin Lythgoe; Mike Warner ; Andy Warner; Sylvia Jarvis, David Cookson; John Thompson